THE KORNILOV AFFAIR: PAVING THE WAY FOR BOLSHEVISM

A Master's Thesis

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PAVING THE WAY FOR BOLSHEVISM

The Institute of Economics and Social Sciences
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by

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I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in International Relations.

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ABSTRACT

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By the summer of 1917, when the dissolution of the Russian defense in World War I reached its climax, General L. G. Kornilov was appointed as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. Kornilov was a passionate *fighting* general with legendary valor, who not only tried to revitalize Russia's combative forces, but also labored to contain a possible Bolshevik insurgence. Despite his flaws in diplomatic communication skills and the ultimative language he employed, he attracted much support and gradually became the center of liberal–conservative circles. Prime Minister Kerensky, however, despised Kornilov and his increasing reputation because he obsessively feared a right-wing coup. This conviction together with his reluctance to stand against the Soviet, had led the Premier to turn a blind eye on the Bolsheviks' preparations for the imminent armed uprising. This study will cover the period from July 1917 to September 1917, when bilateral affairs between the two camps of *dramatis personae* gradually exacerbated, and will seek to analyze the circumstances under which Kornilov rose against the Provisional Government.

ÖZET

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1917 yılının yaz mevsiminde, Rusya'nın Doğu Cephesi savunma hattı dağılınca, General L. G. Kornilov Başkomutan olarak atanarak ordunun başına getirildi. Kornilov, cesareti ve 1. Dünya Savaşı öncesindeki hizmetleri ile Geçici Hükümetin takdirini kazanmış bir askerdi. Göreve getirlidiği andan itibaren, yalnızca ordunun mukavemetini arttırmak için değil, muhtemel bir Bolşevik ayaklanmasını bastırmak için de gerekli tedbirleri almaya çalıştı. Diplomatik usullere olan yabancılığına rağmen, takdire şayan bir destek toplayarak liberal-muhafazakar çevrelerin odağı haline geldi. Başbakan Kerenski ise darbenin Bolşevik kanadından değil sağdan geleceğini savunarak giderek güçlenen Kornilov taraftarlarına karşı ihtiyatlı, ve kimi zaman düşmanca bir politika izledi. Geçici Hükümet liderinin İşçi ve Askerler Sovyet'i ile muhalefetten kaçınması ise Bolşevik cephesindeki gelişmelerin gözardı edilmesine sebep oldu. Bu tez çalışmasında iki kamp arasındaki ilişkilerin giderek bozulduğu 1917 yılının Temmuz ve Eylül ayları arasındaki dönem incelenerek, General Kornilov'un Geçici Hükümete karşı hangi sebeplerden dolayı ayaklandığı açıklanmaya çalışılacaktır.

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INTRODUCTION

The repercussions of the Russian revolution, which were to shape the rest of 20th century world politics, had not been comprehended thoroughly in the year 1917. This was partly because the great powers of Europe were concentrated on the most devastating war ever conceived by humanity. The majority of non-Russians perceived the revolution as "exclusively local"[1], and thought that it could be contained after the re-establishment of peace. On the contrary, however, the revolution's impact had soon transcended local boundaries and changed the course of history up today. Numerous studies on various aspects of this momentous event have so far been made by scholars, especially after the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the abrupt death of the Soviet Union made its birth more interesting. "The revolution of 1917 has defined the shape of the contemporary world", as Orlando Figes puts it, "and we are only now emerging from its shadow."[2]

The circumstances that paved the way for a revolution of such significance are multifaceted. Until February 1917, the government in Russia had been led by a rigidly autocratic monarchy, which traced its dynasty back to 1613, and which had retained its absolutist powers since then. When the Tsarist regime, which was considerably late in emerging from feudalism compared to its European rivals, had begun to suffer from financial recession and military defeats a surge of popular enthusiasm for democracy emerged.[3] The growing resentment of the masses in

[1] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolution: 1899 – 1919* (New York: Knopf, 1990), p.xxii.
[2] Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891 – 1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p.xvii.
[3] Robert Service, *Society and Politics in the Rusisian Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), p.1.

Russia reached unprecedented heights within World War I, and transformed the politics, society and economy of Russia.

In the aftermath of the February Revolution, governmental power was transferred to a provisional body, which was established to correspond to the people's needs while preserving the unity of the Greater Russia. However, the setbacks suffered by the Provisional Government – the April Crisis, the failure of the great offensive on the southwestern front, the barely suppressed uprising of the Bolsheviks in Petrograd in July, the gradual disintegration of the armed forces, the continued friction between the government and the Soviet, and the general unrest in the countryside – destroyed the hopes for the realization of the Revolution's ideals. All these problems "profoundly shook the foundations of a government" as W.H. Chamberlin puts it, "which had been weak from its birth".[4]

By the summer of 1917, when the dissolution of the Russian defense reached its climax, General Kornilov was appointed as the Supreme Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army. Kornilov was a passionate *fighting* general with legendary valor, who not only tried to revitalize Russia's combative forces, but also labored to contain a possible Bolshevik insurgence. Despite his flaws in diplomatic communication skills and the ultimative language he employed, he attracted much support and gradually became the center of liberal–conservative circles. Prime Minister Kerensky, however, despised Kornilov and his increasing reputation because he obsessively feared a right-wing coup. This conviction together with his reluctance to stand against the Soviet, had led the Premier to turn a blind eye at the Bolsheviks' preparations for the imminent armed uprising. Although Kerensky later recalled in

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actually Russian feudalism was much different than Western Feudalism. (eg. Laws, property rights, etc.)

[4] W.H. Chamberlin, 'The Kornilov Mutiny', in M.K. Dziewanowski, ed., *The Russian Revolution: An Anthology* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1970), p.101.

his memoirs that "I feel obliged to say emphatically that I have never doubted his (Kornilov's) love for his country"[5], he chose to challenge Kornilov during his term of influence *(Kornilovshchina)* by rejecting his demands for the immediate restoration of order at the front.

General Kornilov, "despairing of the likelihood of moving the Provisional Government to definite action against the Bolsheviks"[6], rose against the Government and the Bolshevik Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Delegates. The Generalissimo's failure brought about the catastrophic end of the Provisional Government through destroying the prestige of Kerensky both in the eyes of the right-wing and left-wing supporters. Moreover, war weariness, widespread discontent on living conditions, and the "alluring catchwords: 'power to the proletariat and land to the peasantry'" were the main causes of the Russians' indifference or *non-resistance* to the advent of Bolshevism.[7] Power, thus, slid away from the hands of the Provisional Government, paving the way for Bolshevism.

Although the Bolsheviks often claimed that the course of the revolution was already delineated before the Kornilov Affair, it certainly gave a great impetus to the Bolsheviks' cause. Since the emergence of serious new research on the Russian Revolution, above all the works of Richard Pipes and Orlando Figes, the crucial importance of the Kornilov Affair has come more into focus. The purpose of this thesis is to penetrate into the often confused final episode of the path to Bolshevism in Russia.

The thesis is divided into three main parts following the introduction. The first chapter, which constitutes the historical background of the Kornilov Affair,

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[5] A.F.Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism: The Kornilov Rebellion* (London: T. Fischer Unwin Ltd.,1919), p.23.
[6] General A.I. Denikin, *The White Army* (Cambridge: Ian Faulkner Publishing, 1992), p.13.
[7] *Ibid.*, p.15.

explores how and why the Provisional Government lost control after February. For purposes of clarity it is divided into two sub-sections, the first of which looks at the period prior to the February Revolution of 1917. It begins with an analysis of the impact of World War I on the Russian society and further examines the disintegration of the Russian Army at the Eastern Front - the actual cause that led to the decline of the old Romanov Empire. The second sub-section starts with the February Revolution of 1917 and points out the flaws of the new Provisional Government during the April and July crises respectively.

The second chapter, which constitutes the subject matter of this thesis, scrutinizes the mysterious affair between the Premier, A.F. Kerensky, and the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief, L.G. Kornilov. For a better understanding of what happened in the summer of 1917, the second chapter is also divided into two sub-sections. The first one is concentrated on the differences between the two camps of the dramatis personae and the reasons behind Kerensky's appointment of General Kornilov. The second section begins with the Moscow State Conference of August 1917, wherein the disagreement between the Premier and the Generalissimo came to the surface, and further penetrates the mounting conspiracy following the Conference, which resulted in the failed uprising of Kornilov.

The final chapter presents an analysis concerning the aftermath of the Kornilov Affair. It provides the reader with an examination of the Affair's disastrous impact on the Provisional Government's already weakened prestige. It is argued that the conflict between Kornilov and Kerensky seriously damaged the latter's authority, as well as his connection with both conservative and socialist circles. Kerensky's obsessive fear of counterrevolution from the right had led the Bolsheviks to exploit the volatile atmosphere in September 1917. The major intention of the last chapter

is, thus, to discuss the question of how the Bolsheviks became the main beneficiaries of the Kornilov Affair and why the Russian people did not resist the Bolshevik seizure of power in October.

CHAPTER I

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. The Last Days of Romanov Rule (1914 – 1917)

In 1876, Petr Tkachev wrote, "The preparation of a revolution is not the work of revolutionaries. That is the work of exploiters, capitalists, landowners, priests, police, officials, liberals, progressives and the like. Revolutionaries do not *prepare,* they *make* a revolution."[8] It was indeed the drawbacks of the Russian bureaucracy, rather than the revolutionaries, which caused the political awakening of the Russian society within the second half of the 19th century. When the Russian Revolution began is a subject for debate. As in any social episode of history, there is no indisputable way of determining the exact beginning of the February Revolution of 1917. Richard Pipes argues that the first phase of the Revolution "in the narrow sense of the word, began with the violence of 1905"[9]. Orlando Figes, on the other hand, suggests that the roots of revolutionary movements in Russia might also be traced back to the 1860's, when the sclerotic imperial regime was alarmed by defeat in the Crimean War and attempted to take measures of rejuvenation.

Since the 1860's, an increasing number of liberal public men, a great deal of whom held official titles, came to understand the fact that unless a broad reformation was carried out to bridge the gap between rulers and ruled, the political order was likely to collapse. Despite its deficiencies, the government's reluctant reforms showed substantial progress in the industrial domain.[10] However, efforts to

[8] Tkachev, quoted in Christopher Read, *From Tsar to Soviets: The Russian People and Their Revolution* (London: UCL Press, 1996), p.11.
[9] Pipes, *The Russian Revolution: 1899 – 1919...,* p.xxiii.
[10] The half-century, which followed the emancipation of the serfs in 1861, witnessed a gradual amelioration in the national wealth as a result of the government's industrialization policies and foreign investment. The primary sector in Russian industrialization was the railway network. The network grew from 1360 km in 1856 to 27000 km in 1885. In 1900 the track became 48000 km and

modernize the social structure of the Russian Empire were hindered by conservative elements of the bureaucracy, the main purpose of which was "to uphold the *status quo*, cost what it may".[11] The actual causes of the Revolution would thus be found in the everyday life of Russian society, above all the increasing exploitation of the peasants and workers, as well as the rigid walls that were built against change. The landed nobility, on the other hand, was in gradual decline during the years of agricultural depression in the late 19th century, and "was turning to the zemstva[12] to defend its local agrarian interests against the centralizing and industrializing bureaucracy of St. Petersburg"[13]. Indeed, as Christopher Read puts it, "The main losers from tsarism's political immobility were a burgeoning and increasingly restless middle class and a more and more unsettled landed elite, which feared for its own security because tsarism appeared to be less and less capable of ensuring social stability."[14]

In brief, throughout the second half of the 19th century the bulk of the Russian society - particularly the intelligentsia, the proletariat and the peasantry - were generating revolutionary tensions. The Tsarist regime faced serious crises when the government failed to take the necessary measures in dealing with the Famine Crisis of 1891-92,[15] the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905[16] and the 1905 Revolution.

77000 in 1914. The peasantry, however, which constituted 80 percent of Russia's population, did not experience a considerable improvement.
Source: Read, *From Tsar to Soviets...,* p.13.

[11] John Keep, *The Russian Revolution: A Study in Mass Mobilization* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1976), p.4.

[12] Following defeat in the Crimean War Alexander II embarked on a reform program, wherein he also created elected local governmnet institutions called zemstvos. The zemstvos operated as county and provisional assemblies.

[13] Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy: The Russian Revolution 1891 – 1924* (London: Pimlico, 1996), p.47.

[14] Christopher Read, *From Tsar to Soviets: The Russian People and Their Revolution* (London: UCL Press, 1996), p.11.

[15] The Russian famine of 1891-92 disturbed an area of around 900,000 square miles in the Volga and central agricultural areas. Oddly enough, these were once the most fertile and productive parts of Russia. The central area that was affected by famine included the provinces of Nizhni-Novgorod,

Nevertheless, the actual driving force of the revolutionary movements in 1917, characterized by organized opposition against the tsarist autocracy to liberate the people, was mostly a product of the First World War. The instability of late Imperial Russia and the deep dissatisfaction of the masses provided plentiful fuel for the fire that was sparked by the disastrous course of the First World War. It was the extraordinary conditions of the War – the food shortages in the cities, the demoralization and breakdown of the Army – that prevented the government to extinguish the rebellion in February 1917 in the same manner as it did in previous crises.

1.1.1. The Impact of World War I:

In August 1914 Russia found herself at war with Austria and Germany. Even though war was the last thing Russia needed, the government felt obliged to resist the Austro-German attempt to destroy Serbia, which was perceived as a step toward German domination of Europe. As witnessed in 1904, when the Russo-Japanese war broke out, Russia's declaration of war caused patriotic enthusiasm, a temporary moratorium on internal frictions, and substantial public support to assist the government's war efforts[17]. While the majority had taken victory for granted, only a

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Riazan, Tula, Kazan, Simbirsk, Saratov, Penza, Samara and Tambov. Of the fourteen to twenty million people 375,000 to 400,000 died, particularly of disease. Furthermore, due to malnutrition caused by the famine, people were more susceptible to infection; inevitably typhus and cholera struck and killed half a million people by the end of 1892. Source: Richard G. Robbins, *Famine in Russia: 1891-1892* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1975), p.19.

[16] Although Tsar Nicholas II and the Minister of War Kuropatkin had taken victory for granted, winning the war proved to be far more difficult than the leaders imagined. As the war continued the Russian military turned out to be poorly equipped and logistical failures increased due to the distance between the battlefield and high command in Petrograd. Soon the war developed into a series of disasters and humiliation for Russia. The defeats fuelled the student protests, workers strikes and liberal movements. Indeed, "so unpopular had the government become that in July 1904, when Plehve, its Minister of Interior, was blown into pieces by a bomb planted by the Socialist Revolutionary Combat Organization, there was hardly a word of public regret…the citizens of Russia were after their rulers' blood." (Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.171.)

[17] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution...*, p.37.

few foresaw what was going to happen. The former Minister of Interior, P.N. Durnovo was among that very few; he warned the Tsar of the disastrous consequences for Russia of a war with Germany five months prior to the outbreak of the First World War. In Durnovo's words,

> "If the war ends in victory, the suppression of the socialist movement will not pose any difficulties…But in the case of defeat, the chance of which in a struggle with such an opponent as Germany it is impossible not to foresee, social revolution inevitably will manifest itself in its most extreme forms. As we already indicated, it will start with the Government being held responsible for all the failures and misfortunes. In the legislative institutions a furious campaign against it will begin, as a result of which revolutionary actions will commence throughout the country. These actions immediately will advance socialist slogans, the only ones which are capable of stirring up and rallying the masses."[18]

Durnovo's prognosis was ignored and public morale, once again, turned sour with the defeats in 1915. A great portion of the Russian army consisted of muzhiki and there were too few officers and N.C.O.s to maintain a proper defense line. The shortage of telephone wire, and codebooks further increased the number of defeats; the Germans, for example, after intercepting the commands, destroyed a Russian army in four days near Tannenberg.

The early optimism, thus, faded away with the reality of war. The strong resentments against the Tsar that were once cloaked by the war were exacerbated by the defeats at the battlefields. Eventually, Nicholas II took over supreme command of the army in mid-1915 and his wife, Empress Alexandra, became the autocrat in Nicholas's absence. The scandalous relationship between Rasputin and the German queen, as she was called, caused rumors of treason and the regime's prestige was fatally injured. Moreover, relations between the Duma and the government deteriorated after Rasputin began to exercise a disastrous influence over ministerial

[18] Durnovo, quoted in Ronald Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution: 1917 – 1921* (London: Routledge, 1997), p.16.

appointments[19]; Russia had changed five interior ministers and three war ministers in ten months. The already unstable pillars of the old regime, on the eve of the Great War, crumbled to dust. The Russian society was severely alienated, and the political and bureaucratic structure became extremely fragile. The First World War not only exposed how weak the autocracy was, but also proved that the regime had lost all its legitimacy. As John Keep argues,

> "The effects of the war upon Russia's fragile social and economic structure were as catastrophic as they were in the military and political domain. Civilians in town and country found themselves caught up in a desperate struggle to meet the insatiable demands of a conflict in which prospects of victory seemed ever more remote…Reactions to the crisis varied according to an individual's social status and his proximity to the front, but all segments of the population gradually came to share a feeling that something was profoundly wrong with the way the country's affairs were being handled…When the monarchy finally collapsed in February-March 1917 the pressures that had been building up irresistibly for two and a half years burst forth with explosive force."[20]

The Tsarist Generals' memoirs provide us a valuable source for understanding the disastrous impact of the First World War on Russia. Contrary to earlier correlations drawn between the inefficiency of Russian heavy industry in war material production and defeats at the battlefields, these sources refer more to structural matters as the major reason for disintegration at the eastern front. General Alexei Brusilov, for instance, reported how the regular army vanished and was replaced by an army of ignoramuses. In his memoirs, he makes the situation at the southwestern front in 1916 plain.

> "On July 15 (1916), all my armies were waiting for a further offensive. The 3rd and 'Special' armies have met on the Kovel Sector and they had the time to bring up new reinforcements and heavy artillery. In general from May 22 to July 30, the armies entrusted to me had comprised 8255 officers, 370,153 soldiers, 144 machine guns and 367 mortars, about 100 projectors and an enormous

[19] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution...*, p.39.
[20] Keep, *The Russian Revolution...,* p.28.

quantity of rifles, cartridges, shells and different other military equipment. By this time, the winter operation of Southwestern armies had finished. The enemy considered our position certainly unapproachable. At the northern front we took back a significant part of our territory, and the center and left flanks won a part of East Galicia and all of Bukovina.

I, the commander-in-chief of the Russian Army, had the right to displace commanders, armies, Corps commanders and all subordinate army heads. The Guards with their heads of the Special Army, however, had been inaccessible for me. The Tsar personally chose them, appointed and replaced them, although it was impossible to achieve change of such quantity. Incompetent management during such a crucial moment would mean missing the advantage of their fighting glory and increasing vain losses for Russia. I knew all this and wrote about it to Alexeyev (The chief of staff of the Southwest front), but it was even very difficult for him to change the calamitous nature of this situation.

I, as a soldier studying military science all my life, was tormented that the grandiose victory, which could have been carried out through appropriate actions from our general headquarters in 1916, had been inexcusably missed. Summing up the fighting work of the Southwestern front in 1916, it is necessary to recognize the following:

1. In comparison with the hopes assigned on this front for the spring of 1916, we have surpassed all expectations. We facilitated the position of the French and English on their fronts; forced Romania to our side and had upset all plans and assumptions of the Austro-German alliance for this year.
2. This operation, however, did not give any strategic results, for the decision of the military council of April 1, by any measure, had not been executed. The western front was subject to the main impact and had not been operated, and the Northern front received the motto familiar to us with Japanese war "patience, patience and patience".
3. The headquarters, in my belief, failed to execute the means to operate all Russian armed forces. It did not operate events; rather events operated it, ‘as the wind operates a leaf’.
4. With those means available for me at the Southwest front, I did everything that I could. - I, at least, could not. If instead of me a military genius like Julius Caesar or Napoleon had been there, maybe, they would have managed to execute something grandiose, but such accusations against me were not and could not be appropriate.”[21]

[21] A.A. Brusilov, *Vospominaniya* (Moscow: Olma Press, 2004) p.172. (My Translation)

As Brusilov describes, by the summer of 1916, the Russian Army, whose survival seemed at stake following the retreats of the previous year, was finally ready for an offensive. At least, in terms of the war-material, there was not a major shortage. Nevertheless, the drastic change in the social composition of the army as well as problems vis-à-vis conscription since the late 19th century, became crystal clear in this period, hindering the development of a successful offensive. Peter Kenez, in his article on the Russian Officer Corps in 1917, presents a substantial amount of data collected from the Tsernalnyi Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv, arguing that the Russian Army did not have sufficient reserve officers and those who served had not received proper training.

The military laws of 1874 allowed Russian young men with four years of education to become a reserve officer after two years of active service and those who had six years of education, after one-year service. During the Russo-Japanese War of 1905, however, it became apparent that the performance of reserve officers was extremely poor and that a one-year service was not enough to make a civilian into an officer. Hence, in 1912, reserve service was reorganized and the required educational background was set at six years while the active service period was raised to two years instead of one. Nonetheless, these reforms were realized only in mid 1913 and obviously did not affect the situation in 1914. [22] Indeed, in 1914, the Russian army could mobilize only 20,740 reserve officers.[23] By contrast, for

[22] For more information see Peter Kenez, 'Changes in the Social Composition of the Officer Corps during World War 1' *The Russian Review,*Vol 31, no.4, (October 1972), 369-375 and Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975)
[23] http://militera.lib.ru/h/ww1/02.html

example, the Prussian army, which had 22,112 regular officers, mobilized 29,230 reservists.[24]

As Kenez further suggests, the difference between the two-sets of officers was obvious; while instances of disloyalty among career officers were extremely rare in 1905, the High Command could no longer count on the unquestioning loyalty of the reserve officers in 1917.[25] The High Command, however, was desperate for officers and used every available source.[26] "Even in April 1914, a few months before the outbreak of the war, there were 3,380 unfilled places in the officer corps. During 1915 the shortage reached crisis proportions…at the end of 1915 there were 15,777 vacancies in the officer corps."[27] Similarly, Norman Stone explains the problematic conscription system in his book on *The Eastern Front;*

> "Legend has a picture of countless millions of peasant soldiers being thrust into battle, armed with long-handled axes, against overpowering German artillery and machine-guns. It is a legend that owes almost nothing to reality; indeed, reality was the very reverse of legend. The army by the beginning of the 1916 campaign, was not suffering from material shortage of any significance, any more than other armies; it did however, experience remarkable difficulties in using the countless millions of peasant soldiers alleged to be available for conscription. The front-line strength was less than that of France, with less than a quarter of Russia's population, until mid-1916."[28]

Similarly, Kerensky in 1965, wrote: "When years later, I read what Hindenburg, Ludendorff, and Hoffmann had to say in their memoirs about the Russian army in 1917 and compared their accounts with those of our own Russian generals, I found,

[24] Karl Demeter, *Das Deutsche Offizierkorps in Gesellschaft und Staat, 1650-1945*(Frankfurt am Main : Bernard & Graefe Verlag fur Wehrwesen, 1964), p.47
[25] Kenez, 'Changes in the Social Composition …' p.371.
[26] With the exception of certain minorities (i.e. Finns Central Asian Republics and especially Jews.)
[27] Kenez, 'Changes in the Social Composition …' p.371.
[28] Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p.212

to my surprise, that the German generals gave a more balanced and favorable picture of our military record at that time than did our own generals."[29]

In the course of 1916, the High Command managed to solve the problem by establishing various officer training schools, and in January 1917 there were only 226 unfilled places.[30] Training thousands of officers was a great achievement, especially in wartime conditions, yet the quality was fatally damaged because the Empire lacked sufficient financial resources for proper training. Lack of understanding and confidence between junior and senior officers was another cause of disorganization during the war, but more importantly, it had even more catastrophic consequences in the Revolution and in the Civil War. As Kenez puts it "When the High Command decided to oppose the Provisional Government, the rank-and-file officers did not go along, and the Kornilov mutiny disintegrated after the government jailed a handful of generals. In the Civil War when the graduates of the Academy of the General Staff – men like Alekseyev, Kornilov and Denikin – called on their fellow officers to fight the Bolsheviks, only an insignificant proportion answered their call."[31]

Change in the character and mentality of pre-revolutionary officer corps is another significant aspect of the Revolution and Civil War. In terms of ideas the Russian officers had a lot in common with their European counterparts. As far as social background was concerned, however, the Russian officers were much different. During the second half of the 19th century a great number of non-nobles

[29] Alexander Kerensky, *Russia and History's Turning Point* (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1965) p.295.
[30] Kenez, 'Changes in the Social Composition …' p.373.
[31] ibid, p.375

received commissions in the German or French armies, however this 'process of increasing social heterogeneity' went even further in Russia.[32] As Kenez puts it,

> "By the time of the First World War approximately half of the officers came from non-noble families. This great influx changed the character of the officer corps. While in Germany and France the newcomers were quickly absorbed and the middle-class young men were assimilated into military society by their aristocratic colleagues, the Russian corps became fragmented. The scions of ancient noble families served in guards regiments, where they enjoyed many privileges: they advanced quickly through the ranks and participated in the pleasures of the social life of the capital. By contrast, the average non-noble officer was likely to serve in the infantry stationed in an outlying district, and to receive such a meager salary that he could hardly support his wife and children. As 19th century Russian literature amply illustrates, such a man enjoyed little social prestige. Yet, for many ambitious young men of peasant families who could not afford an education, the military school was an avenue of social mobility. While the great majority of these men never rose very high in the military hierarchy, there was room for the talented and ambitious."[33]

During the First World War sons and grandsons of serfs commanded armies and some of these generals played major roles in the White movement. General M.V. Alekseyev, A.I. Denikin and L.G. Kornilov were the sons of serfs or lower-middle class men[34]. Although these men often did not question the political status quo, they did not regard themselves as conservatives. They were faithful to the doctrine according to which the Army stood above politics and carried out the orders to suppress revolutionaries, peasant rebellions and workers' protests. Kenez further argues that this ideology was best reflected in their struggle against the Bolsheviks after the October coup: "Their safe 19th century world, in which it was enough to

[32] Peter Kenez, 'The Ideology of the White Movement' *Soviet Studies,* Vol.32, No.1 (Jan 1980), 58 - 83
[33] Ibid, p. 60
[34] Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p.21.

accept the status quo unquestioningly, crumbled under two heavy blows. The first was World War 1…The second blow was the Revolution."[35]

The impact of war transcended the military domain and plagued the whole Russian land, trapping the imperial regime. Norman Stone suggests that the Russian Revolution of 1917 is a result of the war: "The First World War provoked a crisis of economic modernization, and Bolshevik Revolution was the outcome".[36] Likewise, Tsuyoshi Hasegawa argues that the war 'had the most direct and decisive impact, triggering the revolution'.[37] The Romanov Dynasty was not as lucky as it was in the 1905 Revolution; the old regime collapsed a year before the ceasefire in Europe.

1.1. 2 The Rising: February 1917

The immediate cause of the February Revolution of 1917 might be perceived as the downfall of the tsarist regime under the huge pressure of the World War I. The actual causes are related with the strong resentments among Russian society towards the intolerable wartime conditions and the irreconcilable bureaucratic contradictions that the Tsarist regime had no capacity to resolve. Mobilization of the army caused a serious recession in the economy, diminishing the food supply. In major towns, goods and services became scarce, and the inflation rates increased drastically[38]. While public discontent mounted and the confidence of the army

[35] Peter Kenez, 'The Ideology of the White Movement' ... p.76
[36] Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* … p.285.
[37] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, 'The February Revolution', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.48.

[38] **The Percentage Increase in Food Prices, December 1916 – February 1917**

Potatoes	25	Bread	15
Carrots, turnips	35	Chocolate	100
Cabbage	25	Sugar Candy	75
Meat	20	Cookies, sweet rolls	100
Sausage	50	Apples	70
Ham	60	Pears, oranges	150

vanished, the imperial regime ignored the Duma's warnings of a possible revolution. Wartime expenditures and the government's loss of control over the state's finances became Russia's major problem and led to the February Revolution of 1917.[39]

The growing wave of food and wage strikes, protests and radical movements in Petrograd developed into a spontaneous revolution in February. It began, on February 23 1917; International Women's Day gave the women textile workers the excuse to stream into the streets and shout their demands. The demonstrations were welcomed by the 90000 striking workers, whose major slogans manifested the need for bread. Despite several clashes with police, the workers refused to scatter and gradually took control of the streets; even though no major casualties were witnessed, at the end of the day tension reached its climax. The protests grew even larger on the next day; almost half of the Petrograd workers participated in the campaigns. The language used in the workers' protests' slogans became sharper as well, targeting the autocracy and its war-mongering. On February 25, strikes and demonstrations became rife throughout the whole city. With the intensification of violence between the police and the demonstrators, the number of casualties increased. Cossack troops, on the other hand, which were called to assist the police and supposed to intimidate, acted reluctantly to suppress the protests. Consequently, the workers seized numerous police stations and took

Butter	15	Cheese	25
Eggs	20	Milk	40

Source: T. Hasegawa, *The February Revolution: Petrograd 1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1981), p.200.

[39] "There was a demand for money that existing gold reserves could not cover…Pre-war expenditure had amounted to less than 3,500 million roubles per annum. Wartime expenditure rose far beyond this level: 9,500 million roubles in 1915, 15,300 roubles in 1916, of which the War ministry accounted for 11,400 million. Russia spent $27,800,000 per day in wartime, more even than France or Great Britain." Source: Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p.287.

control of a substantial amount of small arms. In the meantime, the first elections to the Petrograd Soviet of Worker's Deputies were held in various factories.[40]

The government's call for the Petrograd garrison to contain the uprising proved to be futile. On February 26 the workers encountered the soldiers in the streets, where most workers tried to associate with their fellow soldiers. At the outset, the soldiers fired to order, killing and wounding the workers. Later, however, the workers resisted until the soldiers faltered and let them pass through the lines. Although the Duma was dissolved on Nicholas's decree, most deputies reassembled and organized clandestine meetings, establishing a provisional committee to take the necessary measures in the absence of the Duma. Finally, on February 27, all regiments of the Petrograd garrison, one by one joined the workers' movement, demonstrating the victory of the revolution. Almost 170,000 men joined the revolution within 24 hours, preparing the way for the united workers and soldiers to seize power in the capital.[41]

The revolution caused the immediate dissolution of the imperial regime. Political authority switched to two new bodies - the Petrograd Soviet of Workers' and

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[40] Chernov, Viktor, *Rozhdenie Revoliutsionnoi Rosii (Fevralskaia Revoliutsia)* (Paris, 1934)

[41] According to the data subsequently produced by the military commission of the Duma (Provisional) Committee, the mutiny in the army developed as follows:

Date	*Time*	*No. of Mutineers*
March 11	Afternoon	600
March 12	Morning	10,200
	Mid-day	25,700
	Evening	66,700
March 13	Morning	72,200
	Mid-day	112,000
	Evening	127,000
March 14	Morning	144,700
	Mid-day	170,000

Source: Alan Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution* (London: Collins and Hamish Hamilton, 1958), p.166.

(On January 31, 1918, the Soviet government adopted the Gregorian calendar, which moved dates by thirteen days. The dates in this quotation are marked according to the Julian, Old calendar.)

Soldiers' Deputies, and the Provisional Government. Without delay, the Soviet commissioned a group to deal with the ongoing food supply problem in Petrograd, appointed revolutionary detachments to the government offices of the collapsed regime and freed a great number of political prisoners[42]. The ministers of the old regime were detained on February 28, and *Izvestia,* the official organ of the Soviet, was published. Nevertheless, the Soviet had another serious concern: How to get the troops to return to their barracks.

The military commission of the Provisional Government ordered the mutineers to get back to their garrisons and obey the commands of their officers. Most soldiers, however, thought that they would be punished for participating in the mutiny and asked for immunity. Moreover, there was general mistrust towards the Provisional Government for their support of the officers, and they turned to the Soviet for protection. As Hasegawa argues, "Thus the decisive and unbridgeable gulf that separated the lower strata of society from the 'privileged' strata became apparent. Alarmed by the possibility that the insurgents might push the Petrograd Soviet to assume governmental power, the Soviet Executive Committee decided to hasten the formation of a bourgeois Provisional Government by negotiating directly with the Provisional Committee."[43] The outcome was the publication of Order No. 1, one of the most crucial documents written after the February Revolution. As Figes puts it,

> "The Order was a popular creation in the full sense of the term. Sukhanov watched as Sokolov sat at a table surrounded on all sides by soldiers, standing sitting and leaning on the table, half dictating and half-suggesting to Sokolov what he should write…There was no

[42] The leadership of the Petrograd Soviet was immediately taken by a self-appointed Executive Committee, which was in turn dominated by three socialist intellectuals, N.N. Sukhanov, N.D Sokolov, and Iu. M. Stelkov.

[43] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, 'The February Revolution', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.57.

> agenda and no discussion of any kind, everyone spoke, and all were completely absorbed in the work, formulating their collective opinion without any voting…When the work was finished they put a heading on the sheet: 'Order No.1'."[44]

On March 1, Order No. 1 was issued by Izvestia. According to the terms laid down in the document, the soldiers and the sailors were to recognize the supreme authority of the Soviet in political affairs; they were to follow only the orders that did not conflict with the commands of the Soviet; they were to elect committees that would exercise full control over weapons; they were to comply with precise military discipline. Moreover, harsh and humiliating treatment by officers was prohibited by Order No.1; disputes between soldiers' committees and officers were to be submitted to the Soviet for settlement; off-duty soldiers and sailors were to enjoy full civil rights; and saluting of officers was abolished.[45]

The front-line soldiers, as well of those at the rear, expressed their hopes that would, to some extent, reiterate and develop various items of Order No. 1. As Marc Ferro puts it,

> "The soldiers aired grievances against their officers for the abuses they had suffered: excessive penalties, acts of violence, coarse language, injustice and arbitrary punishment. Soldiers were human beings – they would no longer accept humiliating practices such as the use of familiar forms of address and other degrading formulas like saluting and standing at attention. As citizens they demanded the rights that henceforth would be enjoyed by civilians – access to information, right of assembly, debate, petition. Order No.1 stated that soldiers in the ranks and on active duty were under the strictest discipline, but that in their private and political lives they could not be denied the rights, possessed by all other citizens." [46]

These wishes were constantly reiterated in the great numbers of resolutions that were intended to transform the entire army statute. Without doubt, the Kornilov

[44] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.330.
[45] James White, *The Russian Revolution: A Short History* (London: Edward Arnold, 1994), p.75.
[46] Marc Ferro, 'The Russian Soldier in 1917: Undisciplined, Patriotic and Revolutionary' *Slavic Review,* Vol.30, No.3 (Sep., 1971), p.485

crisis, which was to shake the pillars of the Provisional Government in August, is closely related to the transformation of the Russian Army especially after Order. No.1. Having witnessed a gradual disorganization of his troops, Kornilov labored to convince the government to introduce the death penalty at the front. The Premier, Kerensky, however, turned down this offer in order not to irritate the Soviet. As Ferro further suggests, "Order No.1 had outraged the officer class, for it struck a blow at their rights of decision and command. The roles were reversed in that the soldiers had dictated a decision, and it was one that had the specific effect of restricting officers' rights."[47]

Although this was a moment when the Soviet had a chance to takeover unchallenged authority in Petrograd, the parties failed to give political leadership to the workers and soldiers. The main reason behind this was that the members of the Soviet, to a large extent, did not want to jeopardize Russia's war efforts, and deemed it necessary to wage a defensive war against imperial Germany. Furthermore, the majority of the revolutionary parties in Russia, who had been active for the previous two decades were caught unprepared and lacked an agenda for this sudden revolution. Indeed, even the Bolsheviks were unable to propose their plan - demanding an end to the war, transference of all power to the Soviets, and immediate seizure of land by the peasantry - until their leader's return from exile in April. Nonetheless, by March 1917, the Bolsheviks were a minority in the Petrograd Soviet, which was dominated mostly by the Socialist Revolutionaries and Mensheviks. Besides, contrary to the Bolsheviks, the two main parties of the Soviet thought that the war with Germany should continue, and a period of

[47] ibid, p.487

capitalist development should be experienced in order for a mature background to emerge for an ideal socialist order.

Figes argues that the tragedy of the 'Glorious February' lies in the very fact that the Soviets missed their only chance to resolve the revolution in a democratic and socialist form.

> "While the Soviet leaders wanted to restore order, most of them had no intention of assuming power. The whole basis of their strategy was to pressurize the Duma leaders into forming a 'bourgeois government'. Thus there arose what Trotsky later called the 'paradox of the February: that a revolution made in the streets resulted in a government made in the salons. This was a recurring pattern throughout the politics of 1917: there were several moments (February, April, July and September) when the Soviet leaders might have taken power, when indeed the crowds came out on to the streets with the express demand that they do just that, but on each occasion they shied away from the responsibilities of the government…The Bolsheviks reaped the benefits." [48]

The Petrograd Soviet Executive Committee held a meeting on the evening of March 1. They discussed the possible formulas for formation of a government and decided that the Duma Provisional Committee should be encouraged to exercise power. The majority of the members further decided that Soviet intervention in this matter should be restricted to a number of issues, such as the monitoring of their implementation and the right of veto over ministerial decisions. Finally, the establishment of the Provisional Government and its supreme authority was recognized until the Constituent Assembly met to decide Russia's future. It was decided that the Provisional Government[49] should assume the responsibilities that had been previously carried out by the imperial Council of Ministers.

[48] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.331.
[49] Prince Georgii Lvov, a liberal minded landowner who was the head of the Zemstvo League, became the head of the new Provisional Government. He formed a cabinet, which included Pavel Milyukov, a Cadet Party member, as Foreign Minister, Alexander Kerensky as the Minister of Justice.

Late at night on March 2nd Tsar Nicholas II received Guchkov and finalized the inevitable, bringing an end to the 300-year-old Romanov dynasty. The act of abdication concluded that, "In agreement with the Imperial Duma, We have thought it right to abdicate from the throne of the Russian State, and to lay down the supreme power. Not wishing to part with Our dear son, We hand over Our inheritance to Our brother, Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich and give him Our blessing to mount the throne of the Russian State…May the Lord God help Russia."[50] The Grand Duke, however, announced that he would accept the throne only if the Constituent Assembly made such an offer by its free consent.

At the fall of the Tsarist Government, there was an outburst of joy among the soldiers at the front as well as by those at the rear. As Ferro argues, "The letters and telegrams they (soldiers) sent to the Petrograd Soviet and the Provisional Government divulged their miseries, desires and aspirations."[51] Still, there were doubts about the effectiveness of the new Provisional Government. The major one was the existence of the Government's competitor, the Soviet of Worker's and Soldier's Deputies; the February Revolution had created two self-constituted authorities instead of one. This `dual power` relationship was to create serious problems throughout the period between February and October, hampering the long-desired democracy in Russia. As War Minister Guchkov broadly defines it,

> "The Provisional Government does not possess any real power; and its directives are carried out only to the extent that it is permitted by the Soviet of Worker's and Soldier's Deputies, which enjoys all the essential elements of real power, since the troops, the railroads, the post and telegraph are all in its hands. One can say flatly that the

[50] Nicholas II, quoted in Moorehead, p.173.
[51] Marc Ferro, 'The Russian Soldier in 1917: Undisciplined, Patriotic and Revolutionary' *Slavic Review,* Vol.30, No.3 (Sep., 1971), p.488

> Provisional Government exists only so long as it is permitted by the Soviet."[52]

In short, the most important result of the February 1917 revolution was the sudden death of the Tsarist regime, which previously had been the sole authority to control all the state institutions and the society. The Provisional Government, which replaced the Tsarist authority, was impotent in ensuring the integrity of Russia at war, and lacked a coherent ideology to pursue the goals of those who realized the February Revolution. Nor was the Petrograd Soviet able to fill the political vacuum in the aftermath of the collapsed regime. The February Revolution, "thus marked both the end of the old regime and the beginning of a new revolutionary process."[53]

1.2.Crisis of Authority

In the aftermath of the February triumph in Petrograd, the revolution spread like wildfire and gave birth to two parallel systems of government throughout the country, wherein the Soviets functioned alongside the local authorities, who were subordinates of the Provisional Government. The Provisional Government, in the legal sense, was set to correspond to the interests of the bourgeois revolution, whereas the Soviet would speak for the people's revolution. Hence the bilateral relationship between the local authorities and the Soviets would be 'complementary' rather than 'competitive' and the 'dual power' would enhance the cooperation between the liberal and socialist factions of Russia. The Provisional Government enjoyed an extensive prestige at the outset; it dispersed the Tsarist police force; abolished restrictions on freedom of speech, press and association; cancelled the discriminatory laws. Nevertheless, 'behind the scenes, the government began to

[52] Guchkov, quoted in Fitzpatrick p.47.
[53] Tsuyoshi Hasegawa, 'The February Revolution', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.60.

suffer from its internal divisions, which reinforced a tendency for each minister (and even assistant minister) to pursue his own policy'. [54] Furthermore, the debates over the vague constitutional state of the Provisional Government remained popular. Lenin, in his *April Thesis,* particularly emphasizes the peculiar nature of the dual power,

> "The highly important feature of the Russian revolution is the fact that the Petrograd Soviet of Soldier's and Worker's Deputies, which, as everything goes to show, enjoys the confidence of most of the local Soviets, is *voluntarily* transferring state power to the bourgeoisie, and its Provisional Government, is voluntarily *ceding* supremacy to the latter, having entered into an agreement to support it, and is limiting its own role to that of an observer, a supervisor of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly (the date for which has not even been announced as yet by the Provisional Government). This remarkable feature, unparalleled in history in such a form, has led to the *interlocking* of *two* dictatorships: the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie and the dictatorship of the proletariat and the peasantry…There is not the slightest doubt that such an interlocking cannot last long."[55]

Moreover, there were two challenging problems vis-à-vis the legitimacy of the Provisional Government – the social problems and the ongoing war. [56] The Bolsheviks led by their exiled leader did not fail to spot these two points.

The first one concerned urgent social problems, most importantly the distribution of the land to the peasantry, on which the Government hesitated to take action. The Provisional Government declared that it could not make such fundamental changes until the Constitutional Assembly's meeting. The meeting in question, however, would be postponed for security reasons, since the country was under occupation. Thus, the desired outcome of the February revolution was already put off to an unclear date by the Provisional government. As a matter of

[54] Howard White, 'The provisional Government', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.394.
[55] V.I. Lenin, *The April Thesis* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p.28.
[56] SBKP, *Sovyetler Birligi Komunist Partisi Tarihi* (Ankara: Aydinlik Yayinlari, 1970), p.218.

fact, the liberals, who were a majority in the Government, were concerned about the transfer of political power to various socialist parties in the Constituent Assembly, hence, decided to wait for an Allied victory in the war to gain upper hand.

With respect to the second problem, on the other hand, the Provisional Government was to be confronted with a much more serious opposition from the Bolsheviks. There was a split between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet regarding the plans for the ongoing war. Whereas the Provisional Government was determined to continue the war until victory had been won, the Petrograd Soviet strongly rejected this notion. Even though Milyukov stressed the former imperial regime's secret contracts with the Allied powers, which guaranteed the acquisition of Constantinople and annexation of further territories, the Petrograd Soviet disavowed the succession of such secret agreements and called for peace. Milyukov, in his diplomatic note to Russia's warring allies, argued that

> "The government under the old regime was, of course, incapable of grasping and sharing these ideas of the liberating character of the war, of the establishment of solid foundations for the peaceful existence of nations, of self-determination for oppressed peoples…But free Russia, however, can now speak in a language that will be comprehensible to the leading democracies…and now she hastens to add her voice to those of her allies. Imbued with this new spirit of a free democracy, the Declaration of the Provisional Government cannot of course, give the slightest cause to think that the Revolution has entailed any weakening of Russia's role in the common struggle of the Allies."[57]

Milyukov's emphasis on prosecuting the war to a 'victorious conclusion' rather than an immediate and non-annexationist peace triggered mass demonstrations in April. The continuation of imperial ambitions through

[57] Milyukov, quoted in Kowalski, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.55.

Milyukov's foreign policy- and the Provisional Government in general - caused a deep disappointment among the workers and soldiers in Petrograd. As to the rest of the Russian people, there were divergent views concerning the ongoing war. The conciliatory policies of the Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries were still supported by many workers, soldiers, and peasants, who believed that the Provisional Government would settle 'every' dispute in Russia by peaceful means and that the war continued for the survival of their motherland. Lenin called these people 'honest but misled supporters of war'.[58]

1.2.1 The Provisional Government and The Rise of the Bolsheviks

The conflict between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet was exacerbated within eight months, reaching its climax in the form of the October coup. Bearing in mind the political conversion of the Soviets from local organizations, which had previously encouraged parliamentary democracy, into mere pawns serving the interests of revolutionary socialists, the fatal mistakes of the Provisional government become clearer. Had the Provisional Government proposed earlier solutions to the urgent problems of the country, such as the reorganization of economy, enhancement of the food supply mechanism, continuation of industrial reforms, and the redistribution of the land to the peasantry, the troubled 'dual power' system might have been cured. The government, however, concentrated its efforts on the war, and fueled the antagonism among the workers and peasants against the government, compelling them to turn to the Soviets. This conviction was to be further reinforced by the Bolsheviks upon the arrival of Lenin in April.

[58] *Ibid.*, p.219.

Upon his arrival in Petrograd, Lenin immediately issued his famous 'April Thesis', the ideological basis of which was manifested in the slogans 'Peace, Land, Bread', and 'All Power to the Soviets'. Lenin's *April Thesis* had become the primary pamphlet that revealed the struggle plan for the transition from the bourgeois revolution to the socialist revolution. According to this plan, the economic transition would be realized through the nationalization of all land, confiscation of the properties of the landowners *(zemlya)*, and the merger of all banks within a single body under the auspices of the Soviet of workers' deputies[59].

Developments in Petrograd, following the Bolshevik conference, contributed to Lenin's ambitions. Milyukov's persistence over the continuation of war, and the note he had previously sent to the Allied powers regarding Russia's commitment to the secret agreements of the former imperial regime were all policies in sharp contradiction with those of the Petrograd Soviet that rejected all further annexations and reparations.[60] April became the month of mounted tension, which eventually triggered widespread armed demonstrations led by the workers and soldiers. In this sense, Miliukov's diplomatic note might be perceived as the 'immediate and most easily reducible cause of the April Crisis'[61], for it explicitly demonstrated the conflict between the Provisional Government and the Petrograd Soviet over the course of Russian foreign policy. Although there was a moment when the government was about to comply with General Lavr Georgiyevich Kornilov's suggestion of curbing the demonstrations by force, the Petrograd Soviet decided to take up the control of the garrison and calmed the frustrated soldiers. The political crisis was temporarily solved with the resignations of Milyukov and

[59] Lenin, *The April Thesis…*, p.41.
[60] *Sovyetler Birligi Komunist Partisi Tarih…*, p.225.
[61] Ziva Galili, 'The April Crisis', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.66.

Guchkov. Yet, it also demonstrated just how weak the Provisional Government was, 'deprived of the single most important means of exercising its authority'.[62] The Provisional Government was reorganized in early May; Kerensky became the minister of war, and the socialists received 6 out of 15 cabinet posts. Meanwhile, a prominent revolutionary, Leon Trotsky, returned from exile in May, and joined the Bolshevik Party.

In most histories of 1917, the April Crisis appears as the first in a series of major political crises and as a harbinger of the polarized and radicalized landscape of later months. The April Crisis generated substantial support for the Bolshevik Party. Nonetheless, when the first all-Russian Congress of Soviets convened in the capital on June 3, the Bolsheviks were still a minority whereas the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries held the majority.[63] The new coalition government led by Lvov and Kerensky, on the other hand, was being confronted with severe economic and social problems from the very day it took office; the risk of famine threatened major cities due to the ongoing food supply problem, prices skyrocketed, and the number of striking workers increased causing further industrial recession. Although previously giving support to the Provisional Government, the Congress of Soviets responded to the escalating crisis by favoring the state monopolies, which produced basic items such as bread. Despite the new troubles of post-February Russian society, the new government, once again, postponed all problems for the Constituent Assembly. Even more, on July 16, Kerensky tried to halt the demonstrations by ordering an offensive, which ended up

[62] A.V. Ignatyev, *Vneshnyaya Politika Vremennovo Pravitelstva,* (Москва, 1974) pp.196-206

[63] The Mensheviks and SR's had 700 – 800 delegates, whereas the Bolsheviks had hardly over 100. Source: *Sovyetler Birligi Komunist Partisi Tarihi…*, p.231.

with an absolute disaster, and disorganization of the army, thus, contributing to the Bolsheviks' cause.

The Congress of Soviets, observing the strong resentment of workers and soldiers against Kerensky's offensive, was compelled to adopt a resolution, which called for a meeting of the Constituent Assembly no later than September 30. The Congress organized a huge demonstration, led by 400,000 Petrograd workers, which further revealed the growing influence of the Bolshevik Party on the working class in the capital. July 3, 4, and 5 became the pinnacle of the mounting protests and witnessed a spontaneous armed demonstration of 500,000 workers, soldiers and of the Kronshtadt sailors. Once more, the slogans depicted the Bolshevik Party propaganda, such as 'Down with the war', or 'All power to the Soviets'.[64] Finally, the demonstrators denounced the Provisional Government, advanced on the Tauride Palace, the headquarters of the Congress of the Soviets, and forced the Soviets to assume all power.[65]

Surprisingly, the initial Bolshevik policy was to contain the demonstrators and keep them peaceful. When the Bolsheviks found themselves leading the movement, they quickly realized that it was easy to seize power in Petrograd, yet impossible to hold it without the support of the soldiers at the front and the peasants. Therefore, the policy of their leadership in the demonstrations was announced as safeguarding peace in the capital. Nonetheless, the Congress of Soviets accused the Bolsheviks of attempting a revolutionary movement and called on the troops from the front to suppress this insurrection. The soldiers, following their arrival to the capital on July 5, undermined the uprising and recognized the supreme authority of the Congress in Russia. Kerensky replaced Lvov as Prime

[64] *Ibid.,* p.231.
[65] O.N. Znamenskiy, *Iyulskiy Krizis 1917 Goda* (Izdatelstva NAUKA: Moскva, 1964) pp.120 - 130

Minister while holding the portfolios of War and the Navy.[66] He formed a coalition government of both socialist and Kadet wings in two weeks. On July 10th General Kornilov assumed command of the armed forces on Kerensky's offer. Moreover, Kerensky ordered the disarming and dispersal of the mutinying units and reduced the Petrograd Garrison to 100,000 men. Despite the new government's initial display of resolve, however, Kerensky failed to crush the Bolshevik Party when he had the chance. Richard Pipes argues that the reason behind this reluctance was evident; 'The July putsch imbued Kerensky with an obsessive fear that the right would exploit the Bolshevik threat to stage a monarchist coup'.[67] Ironically, Kerensky's indulgent treatment of the Bolsheviks, who were about to overthrow him and the new government within the course of the July Days, would be in sharp contradiction with his impulsive reactions against his new commander in chief.

1.2.2 The White General

Born in 1870 at a Siberian garrison town[68], Lavr Georgiyevich Kornilov was the son of a Cossack peasant officer. [69] As W.H. Chamberlin describes, Kornilov was a picturesque personality, and full of Eastern color; "Kornilov's slanting eyes, slight, erect figure and Mongolian physiognomy suggest that in his veins flowed the

[66] Pipes, *The Russian Revolution...,* p.437.
[67] *Ibid.,* p.438.
[68] Ust-Kamennogorsk, Semipalatinskoi Gubernii
[69] The Bolsheviks later tried to disavow Kornilov's peasant background in order to discredit his myth, by claiming that his father was actually a Tsarist officer, not a peasant.
"We had finished the General Staff Academy together. He was the son of a government official and not of a Cossack peasant as he wrote in his proclamations to the people and the army during the revolt. At the Academy he kept aloof , rarely mixed with his fellow-students, and seemed imbued with the quality of envy."
M.B. Bruyevich *From Tsarist General to Red Army Commander* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), p.151.

blood of some Oriental people."[70] Although lacking family inheritance, land, and money, Kornilov, by a Herculean effort, made his way into the Omsk military school when he was 13, where he studied with eagerness and on release had the highest grades among the cadets. He, then, entered the Artillery School of Petrograd. By achieving a phenomenal academic record, he was designated by his commander to a post at the Academy of Joint Staff. Lieutenant Kornilov served in the Staff College for three years, where he received a silver medal and became captain ahead of schedule - his surname had been inscribed on a marble roll of honor.[71] "This modest and timid artillery officer, thin and short, with his Mongolian personality had survived successfully in the academy and during the examinations completed all science courses at once,"[72] General A. Bogaevsky later recollected in his memoirs.

Kornilov owes his reputation to a number of factors, all of which he had solely accomplished by his own virtue. He had become familiar with several Turkic languages and various dialects, whereby he also learned their customs. It was the reason for his personal bodyguards, who were mostly Tekintzy[73] or Turcoman warriors, being devoted to him. He received his first post in Turkestan and served in

[70] William Henry Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution 1917 – 1921* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1935), p.192.
[71] Arkady Borman, 'My Meetings with White Russian Generals' *Russian Review*, Vol.27, No.2 (Apr. 1968), 215 - 224
[72] militera.lib.ru

[73] It is also argued that the Savage Division's (the official title is *Kavkazkaia Tuzemnaia Diviziia*) *devotion* to Kornilov is questionable. "The division had been formed as a non-proffessional, 'wild' volunteer unit in 1914 – originally composed of the Chechen, Cherkess and Tatar (Azeri) cavalry regiments and an Adjarian infantry battalion – to serve in the First World War as part of the 3rd Cavalry Corps. But the name of the division, partly a term of chauvinist abuse and partly a badge of honour, also called to mind nearly a century of wars for the conquest of the 'wild', mountainous North Caucasus, fought largely between the Russians and the Chechens and Cherkess. Reports in the Muslim press, subsequently verified by leading historical accounts, held that the officers of the Savage Division, mostly Russians and Georgians, may indeed have been in league with Kornilov. But the troops, ironically famous for their strict discipline, were neither aware of nor sympathetic to Kornilov's designs. When they were stopped 37 miles outside the city by Russian railway workers and left-wing Muslim (Volga Tatar) agitators (September 1917), they immediately joined the anti-Kornilov defensive.
Source: Michael G. Smith 'Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narratives of the Russian Revolution in Baku' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.36, No.2 (Apr., 2001), 211 - 240

the frontline, which was located on the Afghani border. The Pathan Revolt of 1897 served as an instrument for the Russians to revitalize their interests in Afghanistan wherein Captain Kornilov managed to obtain crucial documents about the precise locations of the Afghani fortifications[74]. His prudence and success in this critical task brought him a substantial amount of fame. From 1899 to 1904, he traveled thousand kilometers, visited Persia, Afghanistan, China and India, constantly risking his life.[75] General Lukomsky wrote in his memoirs that Kornilov also published a book in 1901 called *Kashgaria and East Turkestan or (The Land of Kashgar)*, which gained popularity in the1900's – although the existence of such a publication was not certain prior to the 1970's.[76]

Following his mission in Turkistan, he fought in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 and later served as a military attaché in China. For four years he conducted diplomatic affairs vis-à-vis military matters, meeting English, French, and German diplomats. As an old habit he traveled all across Mongolia and most parts of China. Having returned to Russia, Lavr Georgevich became commander of a Warsaw military district, but soon left for an Eastern district (Zaamursky). In 1912, he was the commander of a brigade in Siberia (Vladivostok) [77].

He became the commander of a brigade on the Carpathian front in World War I (48th infantry division, which is a part of III Army of A. Brusilov). [78] He fought in

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[74] Luckett, *The White Generals…,* p.62.
[75] ibid, p.63
[76] "This (the alleged book published by Kornilov) appeared to be merely one of the many extravagant claims made by Kornilov's supporters after his death in 1918. Certainly none of the major libraries in this country seemed to be aware of the existence of such a book. However, further inquiries were made, leading to the conclusion that the book had been published. Indeed, it subsequently turned out that several bibliographies about Turkestan mentioned it, and that a copy was held by the Lenin State Library in Moscow. The full title of the book as published is as follows: *Kashgariya ili Vostochnyi Turkestan…*"
Source: D.N. Collins, 'General Kornilov and the Land of Kashgar: A Note', *Soviet Studies,* Vol.26, No.2 (April 1974) 274-275

[77] Luckett, *The White Generals…,* p.62.
[78] A. A. Brusilov, *Vospominaniya* (Moscow: Olma Press, 2004), p.181.

Galicia and the Carpathians. On Austro-Hungarian territories, he fought side by side with the 4th rifle brigade of general A. Denikin – part of VIII Army. Following the first winter, despite serious casualties, the 48th division received the name "Steel" for its valorous actions. "Strange business", recollected Brusilov, " The general (Kornilov) never neglected his division… he sustained horrifying losses but never left the front… the officers and soldiers loved him for he trusted them... He was brave indeed, but he sometimes climbed forward rashly".[79]

Even though Kornilov's soldiers cheered his distinguished personal courage, as Brusilov recollected, he was not a great commander of large military units. On May 4th 1915, two days after the successful German offensive had begun, it became apparent that the Germans were not fast enough to capture the Carpathian part of III Army and to cut the connection between III Army and the neighboring VIII Army. "Only one division – Kornilov's – was caught" as Norman Stone puts it, "partly because its order to retreat came too late, partly because its supply-routes were taken up with other troops' supplies, partly because Kornilov foolishly counter attacked: he surrendered on 6th May, with all but five guns."[80] Nevertheless, other accounts of Kornilov's capture shed a different light on the matter. General Lukomsky, for instance, wrote: "During, the withdrawal of the army from the Carpathian Mountains, while covering, with a handful of heroes, the retreat of his division, General Kornilov was severely wounded and taken prisoner by the Austrians."[81]

His escape from the Austrians marked the true beginning of the Generalissimo's term of influence as a national celebrity. Admiral Bubnov, the

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[79] Brusilov, *Vospominaniya*..., p.182.
[80] Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front: 1914-17* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p.137.
[81] A.F Lukomsky, *Vospominaniya* (Berlin, 1922) p.92.
To what extent Lukomsky's account reflected the truth is uncertain, for he was a faithful supporter of Kornilov. Several articles published during the 1970's regarded Lukomsky's publications with suspicion.

naval representative at Stavka, writes: "General Kornilov was by nature an infinitely brave, honorable, upright and straightforward man, totally imbued with a feeling of his military duty. Thanks to his personal bravery, demonstrated in battle, and thanks to his brave escape from German (sic. Austrian actually) captivity he enjoyed in the army an almost legendary fame, and despite his strictness and exacting demands in service, the soldiers loved him and were devoted to him."[82] Nevertheless some generals such as Bouch-Bruyevich and Bogaevski strongly criticized Kornilov's arbitrariness. Bruyevich, for instance, who later fought in the Red Army, wrote:

> "In the spring of 1915, when the Russian army was retreating from Galicia and his division was surrounded, Kornilov ignominiously deserted it and fled, though it was through his fault that the division had fallen into the trap. Four days later he surrendered himself to the enemy, and, later still, escaped by bribing a Czech surgeon's assistant named Franz Mrnak. This escape, in his telling, had been an act of high heroism, and he even threw into his story, for good measure, the death of Mrnak, who as later on came to light was safe and sound; and so, with the aid of the ultra-reactionary *Novoye Vremya,* he gained nationwide fame."[83]

Hence, instead of being court-martialled, Kornilov received a hero's welcome.[84] It was at this time that Kornilov attracted powerful political backers such as Rodzianko and Guchkov.[85] In the aftermath of the February Revolution, Kornilov served as the commander of the Petrograd Garrison. Yet, he was soon angered at the low level of discipline and upon his own request took the command of Eighth Army[86]. Finally in early July, while mass demonstrations were taking place against Milyukov's foreign policy, and the Germans threatening Russia, Kerensky, on the advice of Boris Savinkov[87], promoted Kornilov to be the commander of South-

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[82] A.D. Bubnov, *V tsarskoi stavke* (New York, 1955), pp.349-350
[83] M. Bouch-Bruyevich *From Tsarist General to Red Army Commander* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), p.152.
[84] A.P. Bogaevski, *Vospominaniya 1918 Goda* (New York, 1968) p.39.
[85] A.F Lukomsky, *Vospominaniya* (Berlin, 1922) p.228.
[86] The Eight Army was one of the very few thriving units during the July offensive.
[87] Boris Savinkov was a former member of the Fighting Organization of the Social Revolutionary Party when he was at his twenties. Following the February Revolution, however, he took a stance

Western Front and a few days later offered him the supreme command of the whole Russian Army.[88]

against the extremists; in particular the Bolsheviks. He became the chief advisor of Kerensky once the Provisional Government had been established.

[88] E. I. Martynov, *Kornilov: Popytka voennogo perevorota* (Leningrad, 1927) 16 - 20

CHAPTER II

2. THE KORNILOV AFFAIR

2.1. The Summer of Discontent

Following the suppression of the July uprisings, the imprisonment of key Bolshevik leaders, and the appointment of General Kornilov as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian army, it seemed as if the Provisional Government would survive through the following turbulent months. Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky, without whom it becomes impossible to assess the Revolution, became the head of the government and reached the pinnacle of power. In Boris Kolonitskii's words, "He personally picked 'the government of salvation of the revolution', and the power of the head of the government was significantly increased."[89] However, this temporary political solidarity that existed in the pre-Kornilov Affair period vanished; leading to dire consequences, it foreshadowed the form of the October coup. The Kornilov Affair paved the way for the Bolsheviks to take advantage of this new turmoil, which provoked serious doubts at the Provisional Government and therefore Kerensky. Indeed, the Kornilov Affair was the *Prelude to Bolshevism.* While most right-wingers, such as V.M. Purishkevich[90] –quite justly- called Kerensky 'the minister of civil war', the government still tried to 'harmonize the interests of landowners and peasants, workers and bosses, labor and capital'[91]. A British newspaper

[89] Boris I. Kolonitskii, 'Kerensky', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.145.
[90] Purishkevich was a notorious reactionary, who had been connected with the Black Hundreds. He argued that 'Until Russia gets a dictator invested with the widest powers, until the Supreme Council consists of the finest of the Russian Generals, who have been driven from the front, and who have staked their lives for their country, there will be no order in Russia'.
Source: Richard Luckett, *The White Generals* (New York: Viking, 1971), p.67.
[91] Boris I. Kolonitskii, 'Kerensky', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.140.

correspondent later wrote, "The Kornilov Affair was the beginning of the end for what at this time could properly be called the Kerensky Government."[92]

Lenin argued that Kerensky attempted to revive the coalition when there was already no basis for it, to preach compromise to those who rejected it, and to prevent civil war when it had already become practically inevitable. Although Russia was already in a state of turmoil and was slowly sliding towards civil war, the Kornilov affair is often considered as the last fatal blow to Kerensky's cult and the new coalition. Kerensky eventually found himself between strong criticism of the left and right wing; both of which regarded Kerensky as a traitor and the Kornilov affair as 'the final act of a tragic misunderstanding'.[93] The Kornilov Affair, which made it possible for the Bolsheviks to heal the wounds of July, was one of the most 'bizarre episodes in the Russian Revolution'.[94] Hence it would be useful to bear in mind the nature of bilateral relations between the two camps of the dramatis personae, namely Kerensky and Kornilov, and the events that triggered the antagonism against both figures, leading to a Bolshevik triumph.

2.1.1. Kornilov's Appointment

Kornilov was a 'fighting general' with legendary valor; he disliked metropolitan areas and politicians as well. Luckett describes the word 'fighting tradition' as "an emotive phrase, [which] conjured up the picture of a leader of men who was the antithesis of the desk-bound staff officer or bureaucrat, who would never hesitate to expose himself to danger, a hero in the sense of Skobelev"[95].

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[92] Arno Dosch-Fleurot, *Through War to Revolution* (London: John Lane, 1934) p.174.
[93] *Ibid.,* p.146.
[94] Richard Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* (New York: Knopf, 1990), p.439.
[95] Luckett, *The White Generals…*, p.64.
Mikhail Dimitreyevich Skobelev (1843–82) was a brave Russian general, and one of the military commanders responsible for the Russian conquests in Turkestan. Skobelev distinguished himself in

Kornilov was just that type of heroic field officer, yet also the type of naïve figure who comes up with clear-cut solutions, such as machine gun methods rather than diplomatic intrigues. The years Kornilov had spent on the battlefields sharpened his aspirations about revitalizing Russia's combating forces and his perception of all politicians as schemers. Likewise, this atmosphere of violence cemented Kornilov's belief that force was a suitable response to disorder and subordination. This belief played out when Kornilov marched on Petrograd. Likewise, Kornilov's immediate response to Kerensky's call for help in July to seek to quell political unrest with military authority was positive. Moreover one of his primary demands was the reintroduction of the death penalty within the ranks of the Russian army. Thus, Kornilov's early battlefield experiences were essential in determining his reactions to later political developments.

Kerensky's appointment of Kornilov to such a high rank, thereby placing so much military power in the hands of such a character, eventually provoked a deep curiosity at that time. It should be borne in mind, however, that Kerensky often played the role of *Hamlet* in his term of influence, and quickly changed his decisions over crucial appointments. In this case, Kerensky, possibly, thought that a change in the command of the army following the disastrous offensive might be imperative. After all, Brusilov, who "of all the old Tsarist Generals had gone farthest in his efforts to adapt himself to revolutionary phraseology"[96], failed to restore the army's combative forces. Apparently, Kornilov, who was much younger than Brusilov, with his reputation of iron will and inexhaustible energy appeared to be a better alternative. Moreover, Kerensky, after presiding in the Military Conference at

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the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, and in 1881 he led the march to Gok-Tepe, which completed the conquest of Russian Turkistan.
Source: Columbia Encyclopedia

[96] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.193.

Stavka on July 29th wherein he listened to the impassionate speeches delivered by a number of old Generals, received a message from Kornilov, which stated that the major source of Russia's problems depended on the 'original and long-standing deficiency of the commanding staff' and that the restoration of order in the army was essential; the message sounded to Kerensky progressive and liberal. [97] Certainly, Kerensky chose this young general because he proposed to use 'Draconian methods' to re-impose discipline in the Army instead of those proposed by the 'Chicken's Deputies.'[98]

Boris Savinkov, on the other hand, was a valuable friend of Kerensky, and the Commissar of the Southwestern Front, who was now being selected as the active administrator of the War Ministry, of which the Premier himself was the nominal head. He had a charismatic character and was probably more convincing than Kerensky. When Somerset Maugham met him, during the pre-revolutionary years in Paris, he was fascinated by this former terrorist; "the archterrorist should have the prosperous look of a lawyer in a stand-up collar, a quiet tie with a pin in it, and a frock coat", wrote Moynahan, "the British writer liked Savinkov for the endearing way he told him that 'assassination is a business like any other, one gets accustomed to it.'"[99] Winston Churchill, on the other hand, who met Savinkov briefly, considered him a 'Russian Bonaparte' and 'one of the most interesting men alive'.[100] Savinkov was politically much closer to the reactionary general while owing his position to Kerensky, and thus tried to keep a foot on both camps. Savinkov believed that if Kornilov's military genius were united with Kerensky's political abilities, the

[97] *Ibid.,* p.193.
[98] B.S. Savinkov, *K Delu Kornilova,* (Paris 1919) p.70.
[99] Brian Moynahan, *Comrades* (London: Hutchinson, 1992), p.228.
[100] *Ibid.,* p.228.

revolution's aspirations would be fulfilled[101]. Likewise, he very well knew the core distinction between both camps; that for Kornilov, Russia came first before the revolution itself, whereas for Kerensky, it was the otherwise. Nevertheless, no one would have suited to Savinkov's position as an intermediary better than him[102]. A stronger and more determined character than Kerensky, Savinkov wholeheartedly believed that order and discipline in the army should immediately be restored and that General Kornilov, given the necessary political assistance, could be a useful means towards this end.[103]

Kornilov, however, was not willing to be a mere pawn in Kerensky's war machine. Certainly, as Pipes puts it, "Kornilov was a patriot, ready to serve any government that advanced Russia's national interests, especially in time of war, by maintaining whatsoever was necessary to win victory" [104], but he did not believe Kerensky had the required strength to lead Russia to victory. Therefore, Kornilov did not rush to accept the proposal. His reasons were that it would not be rational to conduct military operations against the German offensive without taking appropriate political measures that would restore order. On this point, Denikin recalls the third day of the Stavka Conference when a series of telegrams were wired by Kornilov to the Provisional Government and when the General made himself clear on his demands; "I declare that if the Government does not confirm the measures proposed by me, and deprives me of the only means of saving the army and of using it for its real purpose of defending the Motherland and liberty, then I, General Kornilov, will of my own accord lay down my authority as Commander-in-Chief…"[105]. Although

[101] Luckett, *The White Generals…*, p.73.
[102] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.442.
[103] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.193.
[104] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.441.
[105] General A. I. Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil, Memoirs: Military, Social and Political* (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1922), p.302.

both Kornilov and Kerensky had the same goal – to revitalize Russia's combative forces – they had major disagreements over its implementation. In Chamberlin's words,

> "Had Kerensky been a revolutionary of the uncompromising type and had Kornilov been an out-and-out monarchist, anxious to replace the Romanovs on the throne, the appointment of the latter would never have taken place, or at least the irrepressible conflict between the two men would have burst out much sooner than it actually did. But as a matter of fact the desires and objectives of the Socialist Revolutionary Premier and of the Cossack General ran along parallel lines to a certain extent."[106]

Indeed, Kerensky, no less than Kornilov, had the desire to see an army wherein discipline and order remained unchallenged. As for Kornilov, he had no desire to set up a monarchy. Hence the often confused and contradictory period, which resulted in Kornilov's open defiance of the Provisional Government, is only explicable on the assumption that 'Kerensky probably always had at least something of a premonition that by destroying Kornilov he would be simultaneously cutting the ground from beneath his own feet'[107].

Having experienced the main source of setbacks in the Tsarist army, Kornilov's main ambition was to regenerate Russia's armed forces by taking certain precautions – promulgation of a number of laws by the Provisional Government. With this in mind he revealed the following conditions on which he would be willing to accept Kerensky's offer and 'lead the nation to victory and to the prospect of a just and honorable peace'.[108] The message concluded that, "I accept this appointment upon the following terms: (I) responsibility only before my conscience and before the whole people; (II) absolute non-interference with my military orders, including appointments to the high command; (III) extension of all measures lately adopted at

[106] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.194.
[107] *Ibid.,* p.194.
[108] Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil, Memoirs…,* p.303.

the front to all districts in the rear where there are army reserves; (IV) acceptance of my proposals stated in my telegram to the Generalissimo at the Conference at the Stavka…"[109]. Even General Denikin, who was a close friend of Kornilov and the future leader of the White Movement, mentions that the first of these demands would create "a form of sovereignty of the Supreme Command that would have been very original, from the standpoint of state law".[110] In Denikin's words,

> "I waited impatiently for the official reply…on receiving Kornilov's ultimatum, the Council of the Government hotly debated the matter and Kerensky demanded that the prestige of the High Command should be upheld by the immediate removal of the new Supreme Commander-in-Chief. The Government did not agree to this, and Kerensky, ignoring the other points mentioned in the telegram, replied only to the second, by recognizing the right of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief to select his own direct assistants."[111]

Although Kerensky was initially tempered by this *ultimatum*, he actually considered the language of these demands an indication of Kornilov's naïveté in political matters; "At that time I could have entirely shared Prince Trubetzkoy's later expressed opinion of Kornilov: 'My general opinion of Kornilov' wrote Prince Trubetzkoy, 'is that he is above all a soldier unable to grasp complicated political matters, and as such he offers a particularly remarkable sample of our commanding staff'."[112] Indeed, Kerensky thought that Kornilov was apparently lacking necessary diplomatic qualifications for a man of his position. Even his colleague General Alexeev reckoned Kornilov a 'politically illiterate general' and to have 'the heart of a lion and the brain of a sheep'.[113]

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[109] A.F.Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism: The Kornilov Rebellion* (London: T. Fischer Unwin Ltd.,1919), p.53.
[110] Denikin, *The Russian Turmoil, Memoirs…,* p.303.
[111] *Ibid.,* p.303.
[112] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.54.
[113] Moynahan, *Comrades…,* p.230.

Nonetheless, Kerensky shared the same goals as Kornilov – restoration of law and order in the country. Moreover, Kerensky was well intentioned yet timid while taking the necessary steps, such as the reintroduction of capital punishment, for he feared a Soviet unrest, which would jeopardize his position. After all, in the midst of the ambiguity over the nomination of Kornilov, a man of unsuitable political motives, to a post wherein his aspirations of dictatorship would certainly sharpen, "Kerensky made Kornilov the Supreme Commander-in-Chief, who under the old regime could rise no higher than a divisional commander and who had become discredited in the eyes of the revolutionary circles after commanding the garrison in Petrograd."[114] James White wrote, "Why should Kerensky come to appoint this *military mediocrity* to such a position of power when he must have known that Kornilov was politically unsuitable."[115]

Besides, it would be most appropriate to note here that, the appointment of General Kornilov as the supreme commander was a risk worth taking for Kerensky. Not only was he the only option to restore order but also the most-influential person to whom a great majority of soldiers were loyal[116]. In Kerensky's words,

> "The decision to exercise actively the extensive rights of a military commander, the daring to act without fear of responsibility, without hiding behind another's back – these were the qualities most needed at the time. Unfortunately, these qualities were seldom to be found among our higher army command…Therefore it is obvious why I promptly and decidedly promoted General Kornilov, in spite of the original 'ultimative' methods of his activity…(Besides) If we recall

[114] James White, 'The Kornilov Affair: A Study in Counter-Revolution' *Soviet Studies,* Volume 20, Issue 2 (October 1968), p.193.

[115] Ibid, p.193. Although Kornilov's appointment might politically be unsuitable, White's suggestion regarding Kornilov's military mediocrity is rather difficult to support with concrete evidence. D.N. Collins wrote a detailed article on the officers' perception of Kornilov's military capabilities. D.N. Collins, 'Correspondence', *Soviet Studies* Vol.21, No.4 (Apr., 1970), 528 - 532

[116] Nevertheless, the Cossack declarations, which were written upon his appointment with an inflammatory language, had two implications; Kerensky was right to fear a Cossack revolt, and Kornilov was bolstered by a wrong impression that he has a massive Cossack support behind him. Luckett, *The White Generals…*, p.63.

> the whole military-political situation at the beginning of July 1917, it becomes obvious that the substance of General Kornilov's 'demands' was by no means an America discovered by him, but a somewhat peculiar formula applied by him to the measures partly passed, partly planned by the Provisional Government and fully corresponding to the frame of mind of all responsible democratic and liberal circles."[117]

Finally when Kornilov demanded a purge of the Higher Command, implying that the disaster was not necessarily the fault of the soldiers, Kerensky said, "Such a view tended to produce the impression that here was a man with a deeper and wider outlook upon the situation than that of his compeers."[118]

2.1.2. The Split between Kerensky and Kornilov

Kornilov's appointment as C-in-C of the Russian Army is important, for it marks the beginning of the disagreement between the Premier and the Generalissimo. As Maxim Gorky explained, when the Government refused to implement Kornilov's plan immediately, he acted vigorously in his own area. On July 21, Kornilov ordered all commanders subordinate to him to turn machine guns and artillery on all units which abandoned their positions without permission.[119] By doing so, he tried to establish a reputation "as a stern disciplinarian, who, when necessary, was willing to act independently."[120]

Upon his appointment as Commander in Chief of the Russian army, Kornilov ordered General Alexander Krymov to move his troops from Romania to Mogilev and gradually developed Mogilev as the headquarters of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, which

[117] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.29.
[118] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…*, p.14
[119] Maxim Gorky, ed., *The history of Civil War in the USSR,* New York, 1936, p.310
[120] Harvey Asher, 'The Kornilov Affair: A Reinterpretation', *Russian Review,* Vol.29, No.3 (Jul., 1970), 286 300.

included two Cossack divisions and the Savage Division.[121] Mogilev is a site equidistant from the Gulf of Riga and Petrograd. The precise point where the troops were concentrated was within the triangle of *Nevel, Novosokolniki*, and *Velikie Luki*. The development of a potent military force in this region became an important cause of friction between Kerensky and Kornilov. Kornilov perceived Mogilev as an ideal location for mobilizing troops unhindered to either north or southwest and stated that "he wanted a reserve to deal with the possibility of a fresh Bolshevik coup in either city. If that happened, he intended to wipe out the Leninists 'root and branch', whether the government approved or not."[122] Kornilov said that,

> "It's time to hang the German supporters and their spies…with Lenin at their head and to disperse the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies so that it would never reassemble. You are right. I am shifting the cavalry corps mainly so as to bring it up to Petrograd by the end of August and, if a demonstration of the Bolsheviki takes place, to deal with those traitors as they deserve. I want to commit the leadership of this operation to General Krymov. I am convinced that he will not hesitate, in any case of necessity, to hang every member of the Soviet."[123]

Kerensky and many other Soviets, however, worried that Mogilev had been chosen for other reasons, namely as a launching point for an offensive against Petrograd. The latter's assessment is justifiable in the sense that the real German threat was from the north against Riga, not the south. Additionally, there was virtually nothing between Petrograd and Mogilev to check the advance of a hostile army.

Already questioned by the Soviets as to the threatening location of the 3rd Cavalry Corps, Kerensky did not seem to credit his new Commander in Chief's military decisions. Although, Kornilov repeatedly asserted his loyalty to the

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[121] "The most important of the constituent units of the 3rd Cavalry Corps was the Native Division, better known by the cheerful title of the Savage Division…It recruited Muslim Caucasian tribesmen…and as a unit, the Savage Division fought with singular ferocity, and away from the frontline tended to visit its frustrated ardour on the unfortunate civilians in neighboring towns and villages". Richard Luckett, *The White Generals* (New York: Viking, 1971), p.66.
[122] Moynahan, *Comrades…,* p.231.
[123] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.199.

Provisional Government, he was becoming the focal point of right wing supporters – a point on which the polarization between Kerensky and Kornilov is concentrated. As Wildman puts it, "Kornilov was instantaneously transformed into a figure representing the hopes of a resurgent right, overshadowing the Provisional Government, now perceived to be weak and vacillating. Kerensky by this risky step [appointment of Kornilov] was deprived of enhanced prestige when he became Minister President of a new coalition government on July 23rd."[124] Likewise, Harvey Ascher suggests that when Kornilov refused to approve Kerensky's appointment of General VA. Cheremisov as C-in-C of the southwestern front, Kerensky retreated and appointed Kornilov's candidate P.S. Baluev, signaling another weakness of the Provisional Government. "Kornilov's image as a 'strong man' was further enhanced as a result of this, in the wake of the July defeats."[125]

James White argues: "The element common to all the groups and organizations supporting the Kornilovist movement was the military. This element welded together all the dissimilar components whose common purpose was the establishment of a military dictatorship. The General Headquarters at Mogilev became a place of pilgrimage for members of numerous right-wing societies and a hotbed of conspiracy among the officers."[126] This suggestion might partly be justified for most officers sympathized with the military aims of Kornilov and gave him support. The most notable one was General Lukomsky, who was Kornilov's Chief of Staff.[127] However, neither Kornilov nor Lukomsky and other Kornilovists held meetings in Mogilev with the intention of building a plot. The chief

[124] Alan Wildman, 'The breakdown of the Imperial Army in 1917', in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.75.
[125] Harvey Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair: A Reinterpretation', *Russian Review,* Vol.29, No.3 (Jul., 1970), p.289
[126] James White, 'The Kornilov Affair'…, p.191
[127] M.M. Filonenko, the commissar at Stavka and prospective Foreign Minister, often regarded Lukomsky with suspicion.

conspiratorial military organization was the Army and Fleet Officers' Union, most active members of which were Lieutenant-Colonels Lebedev and Pronin.[128]

Due to the meteoric rise in Kornilov's celebrity the rivalry between Kerensky and the General intensified. In the words of General Denikin, "Kornilov became a banner, for some of counterrevolution, for others of the salvation of the motherland."[129] Meanwhile, The Union of Knights of St. George and the Union of Officers hastened to associate themselves with Kornilov. Moreover, a group of public men in Moscow wired him a telegram under the signature of Rodzianko, declaring that, "In this threatening hour of heavy trial all thinking Russia looks to you with hope and faith."[130] Another reason behind Kornilov's increasing reputation was his invitations to top-ranking officers and politicians – a majority of whom were right-wing supporters - to Mogilev in order to acquaint them with the formidable condition of the army. This was the same concern that had led Savinkov to submit papers concerning the Moscow State Conference Program to be signed by Kerensky – as he promised to do and committing him to reintroduce specific measures. Savinkov, having consulted Kornilov in early August, drafted a four-fold program, which called for the introduction of death penalty in the rear, militarization of railroads, implementation of martial law in war industry plants, and the return of military discipline forces to officers from army committees.[131] Yet, once more, Kerensky showed reluctance in issuing these necessary documents in order not to alienate the groups which would support him in the Moscow conference – Savinkov railed at the cowardice of this "narcissistic women's premier"[132]. According to Savinkov, although Kerensky promised earlier to sign the program document, he

[128] A.I. Denikin, *Ocherki russkoi smuty* (Paris, 1922), p.112.
[129] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.197.
[130] *Ibid.,* p.197.
[131] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.443.
[132] Moynahan, *Comrades…,* p.229.

"kept on procrastinating and on August 8th said that he would never, under any circumstances, sign a bill on the death penalty in the rear."[133]

Kornilov, on the other hand, began to exercise his authority independent from the Provisional Government. When General Kornilov's command to restore order and discipline on the front lines of the demoralized armies was finally carried out Viktor Manakin, who was a colonel on the Southwest front under Kornilov's term of command, wrote: "The effect of the initial actions by the shock-battalions was overwhelming. The news of the executions spread over the front like wildfire, and, along the entire front soldiers, who only yesterday had been killing their officers, started to salute all officers. This was a phenomenon totally unheard of since the issuance of Order No. 1. The psychological moment for restoring the front was at hand. Unfortunately, there was no longer any civil authority to clinch the matter."[134]

In the meantime, the military situation was becoming even more desperate. The Germans, aware of the approaching autumn and the imminent harsh winter that would hinder an efficient campaign, had begun to advance up the Baltic coast. In order to stop the German offensive, the Russians installed forces in the Gulf of Riga: a possible Russian defeat in Riga would help the Germans march straight to the capital. The French diplomat Louis de Robien, who witnessed the Revolutions of 1917, wrote in his memoirs that,

> "Russian troops are retreating and running away everywhere. Nobody knows where they will stop. 'On the Volga' General Polovtsov said to Chambrun. I am well aware that he is apt to look on the dark side of things, because he was sacked after the recent events…But the Commander-in-Chief, General Kornilov, is hardly more optimistic. In fact he declared in a published letter that it was

[133] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.443.
[134] Viktor Manakin, 'The Shock-Battalions of 1917: Reminiscences' *Russian Review* Vol.14, No.3 (Jul., 1955), 214-232

> useless to think of launching an offensive before the end of September (?!), and that the whole army must be brought back."[135]

On the other hand, rumors of Kerensky's dismissal of Kornilov were spreading like wildfire. Within this fractious atmosphere, Kornilov received reliable information regarding a possible Bolshevik attempt to assassinate him. He immediately set off with the "Tekintzy" division armed with machine guns to negotiate the terms of Savinkov's proposals with Kerensky on his own turf, the Winter Palace in Petrograd. Kerensky was eventually insulted at Kornilov's regiment's waiting outside his residence and notified the general that further evaluation should be made within the Moscow Conference. Despite Kornilov's repeated warnings of an expected German offensive on Riga, and the necessity for militarization of railways, Kerensky hoped that the Conference in Moscow would be 'a last attempt to save Russia, to broaden the crumbling base of his regime, and stamp some unity on the state.'

Kornilov, however, was not willing to give up. Aware of the fact that the Germans would soon resume their offensive, and led by his growing impatience, Kornilov requested another chance to meet the cabinet. On August 3, he once more hurried to the capital and began addressing the cabinet members about the fragile conditions at the front. While he was discussing the much needed military reforms, Savinkov interrupted and warned him quietly not to disclose too much. A few minutes later, another pause was witnessed when a similar warning came from Kerensky. As Kornilov quickly interpreted matters, both Savinkov and Kerensky were afraid that one or more ministers in the cabinet were leaking information to the Soviets. From that meeting on, Kornilov had lost his already weak belief in the government and regarded it as unworthy to lead the nation; he was to refer time and

[135] Louis de Robien, *The Diary of A Diplomat in Russia: 1917 – 1918* (London: Michael Joseph, 1969), p.89.

again to what he had experienced in that meeting as justification for his subsequent actions.[136]

Actually, Kerensky, since the very day he had taken office, had tried to bridge the gap between the Soviet and the Provisional Government through pursuing the war effort, thus, receiving the support of the latter, while conceding to the Soviet the right to veto legislation. However, the badgering of his new Commander-in-Chief compelled him to choose between the left and the right, "between the interests of international socialism and those of the Russian State" – a choice he always wished to avoid.[137] Kerensky very well knew that granting Kornilov the right to implement capital punishment would entail a split with the hard-earned Soviet support. Indeed, on August 18, a Bolshevik motion in the Soviet meeting for voting on the long-debated death penalty issue resulted in the Soviet's unanimous decision to reject capital punishment at the front as a "measure intended to frighten the soldier masses for the purpose of enslaving them to the command staff"[138]. The decision was a crystal clear indication that Kerensky had no chance of approving Kornilov's demands, a majority of which he thought reasonable. Richard Pipes argues that,

> "In theory, Kerensky could have stood up to the Soviet and cast his lot with the liberals and conservatives. But that alternative was foreclosed for him by the very low esteem in which he was held by these circles, especially after the failure of the June offensive and his indecisive reaction to the July putsch. When he made an appearance at the Moscow State Conference on August 14, he was acclaimed by the left only: the right received him in stony silence, reserving its ovation for Kornilov…He had no choice, therefore, but to opt for the left."[139]

Likewise, observing the increasing friction between the Premier and the General, Louis de Robien wrote further in his memoirs that "The internal situation is

[136] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.445.
[137] *Ibid.,* p.444.
[138] *Ibid.,* p.444.
[139] *Ibid.,* p.444.

still far from brilliant…one has the feeling that there is increasing disagreement between Kerensky and Kornilov, and that the extremist parties are taking advantage of it to gain ground."[140] At this point, Kerensky's major fault was to perceive Kornilov as the center of anti-democratic factions and consider the Right as the only element that posed a threat to democratic Russia. Even though Kerensky witnessed the armed demonstrations of the Bolsheviks in April, June, and July and expected future ones, he convinced himself that the real danger was from the right wing. Domestic affairs in the wake of the Moscow State Conference marked the closing doom for both Kornilov and Kerensky. In Sukhanov's words,

> "In general, towards the date of the Moscow State Conference, a little over a month after the July Days, it was already quite clear that the movement of the popular masses had resumed its former course. The Third Coalition, like the other one before it, was hanging in the air. The Menshevik – SR Soviet was being followed by quite compact groups of burgherdom, but not by the masses of the workers and soldiers. The rank-and-file of the people as before were turning their eyes to the Bolsheviks alone – while Tsereteli and his friends came before bourgeois-landlord Russia and proletarian Europe in the name of 'the whole democracy'.[141]

2.2. The Last Blow to the Provisional Government

The very rationale behind the summoning of the Moscow State Conference[142], which was held in the Bolshoi Theatre on August 12 - 13, was to *feel the pulse* of the nation and to bring together the divergent right and left wing groups

[140] Robien, *The Diary of A Diplomat in Russia…,* p.105.
[141] N.N. Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution* (London: Oxford University Press, 1955), p.492.
[142] "The Moscow State Conference…was not conceived in any way as a legislative assembly; it was rather designed to be a large scale consultative body, where representatives of every class and profession could find expression. Among the 2414 delegates who took part in the sessions of the Conference the largest delegations were from members of the four Dumas (488), from the cooperatives (313), from trade-unions (176), from commercial and industrial organizations and banks (150), from municipalities (147), from the executive committee of the United Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' and of Peasants' Deputies, each of which received 100 places. There was an effort to balance the Conference carefully between the Right and the Left; and it was a symptom of the post-July reaction that the organizations of the propertied classes were granted representation out of all proportion to their numerical weight in the population."
Source: Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.200.

to create a unified revolutionary program[143]. However, just as it seemed crystal clear from the opening sessions of the conference, the latter meetings brought irreconcilable bi-polarization between the Soviets and the right wing groups. "The scene was reminiscent of the opening of the Duma in 1906", as Orlando Figes describes, "The two Russias had not moved any closer in the intervening years. The Bolsheviks had decided to boycott the conference and called a city-wide strike. The trams did not run and restaurants and cafes were closed, including the theatre's own buffet, so the delegates had to serve their own refreshments."[144] The seating plan of the conference hall exactly mirrored the polarization; on the right side sat the middle-class parties, the bankers, industrialists and Duma representatives; while on the left were the Soviet delegates. Kerensky's path to the realization of Russia's unified interests was, thus, closed inasmuch as he leaned towards the left; while the Soviets cheered and clapped during his speech, the liberals and right wing groups were dead silent. Obviously, his wavering reaction against the July putsch was the major factor that caused the friction between him and the liberals as well as conservatives[145]. Sir George Buchanan, who was the British ambassador to Petrograd between 1910 – 1918, wrote in his diary that,

> "Kerensky…has personally lost ground, and he made a distinctly bad impression by the way in which he presided over the conference and by the autocratic tone of his speeches. According to all accounts, he was very nervous; but whether this was due to overstrain or to the rivalry which undoubtedly exists between him and Kornilov it is difficult to say. Kornilov is a much stronger man than Kerensky, and were he to assert his influence over the army and were the latter to become a strong fighting force he would be master of the situation. I hear from several sources that Kerensky did his best to prevent Kornilov addressing the conference, and thought he has been obliged by the force of circumstances to accede to all the general's demands, he evidently regards him as a dangerous rival…There is little love, I imagine, lost between the two men, but our chief

[143] Abraham Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair' *The Russian Review,* no.4, October 1953, p.242.
[144] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.448. Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.200.
[145] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.448.

> safeguard lies in the fact that, for the moment at any rate, neither can get on without the other. Kerensky cannot hope to retrieve the military situation without Kornilov; while Kornilov cannot dispense with Kerensky, who, in spite of his waning popularity, is the man best fitted to appeal the masses…"[146]

Kornilov, on the other hand, was welcomed with an enthusiastic crowd, accompanied by the Cossack soldiers and soldiers of the Petrograd Artillery School. "Middle-class ladies pelted him with flowers at the Alexandrovsky Station. Countess Morozova fell on her knees before him, while the Kadet, Rodichev, called on him to 'Save Russia and a thankful people will crown you.'[147] During his rather dry speech, he reasserted his observations on the Russian army, called for the creation of an army of *iron discipline,* and criticized the futile efforts of the Provisional Government; "…I believe that there should be no difference between the front and the rear in terms of the severity of those measures necessary to save the country" said Kornilov with frustration.[148] It was only when the Generalissimo addressed the conference that his program reached a wider audience; he even attracted some Allied support and sympathy. "In the case of Britain, this extended to finance and the use of a British squadron" wrote Lionel Kochan,

> "A leading Petrograd banker, a friend of the ambassador, made Buchanan privy to the maturing plot at the end of August. Buchanan decided not to denounce the plot and wisely urged the plotters to renounce an enterprise that was not only doomed to failure but so easily exploitable by the Bolsheviks. 'If General Kornilov were wise' Buchanan told his banker friend, 'he would wait for the Bolsheviks to make the first move and then come and put them down'."[149]

Following his speech at the Conference, General Kornilov wrote "I thought it essential to make known to the country the real state of affairs in its armed forces,

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[146] Sir George Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories* (London: Cassel and Company, 1923), p.172.
[147] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.448.
[148] Lionel Kochan, *Russia in Revolution: 1890 – 1918* (Glasgow: Paladin Grafton Books, 1986), p.258.
[149] *Ibid.,* p.259.

and to point out how necessary it was to raise their battle worthiness." [150] General Lukomsky, recollected in his memoirs that Kornilov approached him after his speech and said "I have no personal ambition. I only wish to save Russia and will gladly submit to a strong Provisional Government."[151] The Prime Minister's speech, on the other hand, was grotesque. He gave an extremely long speech, in which he lost his way and the audience as well. At one point Kerensky halted for breath and his supporters burst into applause as if they were trying to end his misery. The conference was over, and Kerensky quietly sat - He could not finish his sentence.[152]

While the presence of General Kornilov was the only factor that saved the Moscow State Conference from oblivion, it was dismissed with no practical legislation made for the amelioration of the army's condition, and clashing views between both camps tormented a much better environment for plots. "The Moscow Conference marked Kerensky's moral downfall" as Figes argues, "The two months between it and the Bolshevik seizure of power were really no more than a long death agony of the Provisional Government"[153] Likewise, Chamberlin asserts that "The State Conference was conceived as a rallying point of national unity. Its failure in this respect was dismal and complete. Not only were the considerable masses of workers and soldiers who were already following the banner of Bolshevism outside its pale; but from the very moment of its opening the participants split into two hostile and irreconcilable camps."[154]

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[150] "Article Printed in *Rech* on August 17, 1917," in *The Russian Provisional Government 1917: Documents* Vol.3 eds. Robert Paul Browder and Alexander Kerensky (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1961) Document 1255
[151] "General Lukomsky's account of the Kornilov Affair," in Browder and Kerensky…Doc.1263
[152] V. Vladimirova, *Kontrrevolitsiya v 1917 g. (Kornilovshchina)* (Moscow, 1924) p.83.
[153] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.449.
[154] Chamberlin, *The Russian Revolution…*, p.201.

2.2.1. The Mounting Conspiracy

Following the Moscow Conference, the anticipated German assault on Riga was launched and, as Kornilov had foreseen before, the disorderly Russian army retreated from the Gulf of Riga. While Kornilov thought that such an experience would alarm the Provisional Government into taking the necessary measures immediately, Kerensky was planning ways to take advantage of this situation and to legitimize the dismissal of his rival. The German defeat, Kerensky thought, would provide him the very opportunity to disarm his rival without provoking the rightwing factions.

On the other hand, Savinkov received reliable information from the French Intelligence, regarding another planned Bolshevik coup for the beginning of September.[155] This particular piece of information served as an instrument for Kerensky's plot as well. The information gathered indicated that the time of the all-out Bolshevik putsch would coincide with the expected German offensive from Riga to Petrograd. Kerensky, cunningly, sent Savinkov to transmit his plans against the Bolshevik putsch to Kornilov; he actually was thinking of using this putsch as another excuse to disarm the general.

Savinkov was presumably misinformed about Kerensky's conspiracy, and served as an intermediary between the General and the Prime Minister; he thus went to Mogilev to negotiate the terms of Kerensky's plan with Kornilov. Kerensky's demands seemed flattering at first sight and pleased the General, since Kornilov himself sought to carry out a similar plan. Kerensky's demands were as follows; (1) In order to practice an unhindered plan the General was required to send the Union of Officers to Moscow since a certain number of people among this group were

[155] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions…,* p.448.

suspected of participating in a conspiracy; (2) For these reasons, the general was required to liquidate the political department attached to Stavka; (3) *The general was further required to send a cavalry corps to Petrograd* -this was to be the 3rd. Cavalry Corps- to be under the command of the government.[156] However, the Prime Minister specifically asked the general not to send the *Savage Division*, and not to appoint Krymov to lead them; apparently Kerensky thought that this particular division and commander were especially loyal to the General. The third task is particularly important because Kerensky's subsequent accusations were such that Kornilov had sent these troops to overthrow his government. In Kerensky's words,

> "The story of the 3rd Corps' march on Petrograd, led by General Krymov, throws important light on the question whether General Kornilov's rebellion was a 'misunderstanding' caused by my 'provocation' as it is termed in Kornilov's address to the Russian people, or whether it was a premeditated crime. I shall record a few facts which will solve this question, without as yet drawing any conclusions therefrom…On August 24th Savinkov left the Headquarters, having secured (according to his statement) General Kornilov's consent 'to send a cavalry corps, *not* to appoint General Krymov as its commander, and to *replace* the native division by a regular cavalry division."[157]

Kerensky concludes by arguing that Kornilov did not abide by his earlier promises and charges him with treason.

Bearing further mind the message General Denikin had received on September 2 from the Commander-in-Chief, one would eventually sense that Kerensky's plan worked out; "According to reliable information, a rising of the Bolsheviks will take place at the end of August. By this time the Third Cavalry Corps, commanded by Krymov, would reach Petrograd, would crush the rising, and simultaneously put an end to the Soviets"[158]. Nevertheless, one would sense that Kerensky's main purpose of demanding the 3rd Cavalry Corps was not only to be

[156] Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair', p.246. (Italics are mine)
[157] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.148.
[158] Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair'…, p.245.

militarily independent of the general, but also to use this action for charging the general with treachery – with an attempted coup[159]. Other than the 3rd Cavalry Corps' march on Petrograd, and the simultaneous declaration of the martial law within the outlying districts, the parties had reached a consensus on designating a pre-existent secret organization in Petrograd to control and protect key areas from the Bolsheviks, such as communication offices, stations, and ministries. Amidst growing rumors, prompted by the Soviets, about the organization's structure, Kerensky's decision to lead them with 100 select officers from his regiment in their attempt later jeopardized his stance. The secret organization's attempt was described as an attempted coup by an army of two thousand officers. Kerensky's plot was now ready.

As Pipes argues, it is often difficult for historians to penetrate the minds of individuals by mere observation of their actions; yet the developments following the State Conference in Moscow make it hard to escape the conclusion that Kornilov was unable to see through Kerensky's deception – that the message carried by Savinkov on Kerensky's order actually targeted not the Bolsheviki but himself. By the end of the negotiations in Mogilev, Kornilov reassured Savinkov that he reckoned Kerensky, despite all his faults, to be a patriot and that Russia needed him. The message wired to Krymov from the Headquarters summed up the commander's instructions:

> "1. In the event you receive from me or directly on the spot information that the Bolshevik uprising has begun, you are to move without delay with the corps to Petrograd, occupy the city, and disarm the units of the Petrograd garrison which have joined the Bolshevik movement, disarm the population of Petrograd and disperse the Soviet.
> 2. Having carried out this mission, General Krymov is to detach one brigade with artillery to Oranienbaum; following the arrival there, he

[159] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.449.

> is to demand of the Kronshtadt garrison to disarm the fortress and relocate to the mainland." [160]

The two assignments indicated that Kornilov implemented Kerensky's orders. The Cavalry Corps were dispatched to Petrograd, in line with Kerensky's first demand, and the disarmament of Kronshtadt, the second instruction which was never carried out. Kornilov's both orders reflected his aspirations of the protection of the Provisional Government from the Bolsheviks. Contrary to Kerensky's accusations of insubordination, Kornilov might be justified in appointing Krymov as the commander of the Third Cavalry Corps for he explained to Lukomsky that "the government feared Krymov would be too harsh in dealing with the rebels, but it would be grateful to him when it was all over."[161]

If Kornilov's favorite mistake was to trust the loyalty of his soldiers more than necessary, the other was to trust Kerensky's envoys and sometimes even *agent provocateurs*. Although the "comedy of errors with the most tragic consequences"[162] had already been experienced in the brief span following the Moscow State Conference, the most mysterious, and peculiar one had not yet come to pass. The Procurator of the Holy Synod, a self-appointed envoy and a flamboyantly corrupt figure, V.N. Lvov[163] (not to be confused with the former Prime Minister, Prince G. E. Lvov), offered Kerensky collaboration free of charge. Vladimir Nikolayevich Lvov was a forty-five year old man, from a well-off landowning family, a man of

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[160] *Ibid.,* p.450.
[161] *Ibid.,* p.450.
[162] ibid, p.456
[163] "Having studied philosophy at St. Petersburg University, he enrolled at the Moscow Theological Seminary, then pursued desultory studies and for a while contemplated becoming a monk. He eventually chose politics. He joined the Octobrists, and served in the Third and Fourth Dumas. During the war he belonged to the Progressive Bloc. Owing to wide social connections, he got himself appointed Procurator of the Holy Synod in the First Provisional Government, a post he held until July 1917, when he was dismissed. He took the dismissal badly and harbored a grudge against Kerensky. He is said to have considerable personal charm, but was regarded as naïve and incredibly frivolous."
Source: Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.451.

"burning ambitions but no commensurate talents"[164], and a consciously malevolent figure who had a minor amusement in editing the contents of the messages he had been asked to deliver; such as *Kornilov proposes* would be *Kornilov demands* – a phrase that could barely enhance mutual negotiations[165].

After presenting himself as a mere patriot who was backed by a substantial amount of support, Lvov told Kerensky that the Provisional Government was losing its legitimacy in the eyes of both right and left wing followers. He further advised the Prime Minister not to exclude certain elements in his plans for the sake of advancement of Russia – For Lvov, Kadets and even more moderate groups should be taken into consideration. Although, Kerensky was not astonished by Lvov's ideas since they were not quite unique notions Kerensky thought that Lvov would be a suitable instrument for his interests and therefore should not be waived aside. Interestingly, although Lvov fell far beyond Kerensky's sphere of influence and conviction, he was sent for subsequent negotiations with the General in Mogilev. Pipes argues that "there is no reason to doubt Kerensky, but it is not improbable that, consciously or not, he gave Lvov the impression that he wished to know more, using him, if not as a proxy, then as an intelligence agent to learn whether there was any substance to persistent rumors of anti-government plots in Mogilev."[166]

To Kornilov's surprise, Lvov came up with a rather bizarre proposal to the general. Even though Kornilov seconded all the suggestions concerning the suppression of a counter-revolutionary attempt, Kerensky now appointed another envoy to present a different deal. Even so, the Generalissimo agreed to have a word with him. "Although Kerensky had not given me specific authority to conduct negotiations with Kornilov" Lvov later recalled, "I felt that I could negotiate in his

[164] ibid, p.450
[165] Luckett, *The White Generals…*, p.73.
[166] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions …*, p.452.

name inasmuch as, in general, he was agreeable to the reorganization of the government."[167] Although it is quite ambiguous what Lvov precisely offered the general, under Kerensky's title, it is known that Lvov manipulated Kornilov's dictatorial tendencies, and Kerensky's obsessive fear of counter-revolution. Finally, Lvov asked Kornilov's views on how to assure firm government in Russia and told him that the Premier wanted to know which of the following proposals the General would consider more apt; "(1) Organization of a new government with himself as a dictator; (2) A new government invested with unlimited powers and consisting of three or five members, one of whom would be Kornilov; (3) Kornilov as a dictator and a Supreme Commander at the head of a new government."[168] Interpreting Lvov to mean that Kerensky was offering him dictatorial powers, Kornilov replied that he would be more willing to accept the third proposal, and said that "He did not crave power…and would subordinate himself to every head of state; but if asked to take on the main responsibility, as Lvov (and presumably the Prime Minister) suggested he might, he would not refuse."[169]

Following the talks at Mogilev, Lvov rushed backed to Petrograd, to the Winter Palace. Without telling Kerensky that he asked Kornilov's opinion on three options, he straightforwardly said that the Generalissimo demanded dictatorial authority. "At first I burst out laughing. 'Don't joke V.N.' I said" wrote Kerensky in his book on the *Kornilov Affair*,

> "This is no time to joke; the situation is very serious, Lvov answered…I did not hesitate for an instant in acting. I rather felt than understood the extraordinary seriousness of the situation, if…if only Lvov's words were even remotely in accord with reality…I began to explain to Lvov that I could not convey such a communication to the Provisional Government without proofs…At

[167] Lvov. Quoted in Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.452.
[168] Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair'…, p.247.

[169] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.453.

last I asked him to put into writing all Kornilov's points…Here is the text of the note Lvov wrote:

General Kornilov proposes-
(1) That martial law shall be proclaimed in Petrograd.
(2) That all military and civil authority shall be placed in the hands of the Generalissimo.
(3) That all ministers, not excluding the Premier, shall resign, and that the temporary executive power shall be transferred to the Assistant Ministers till the formation of a Cabinet by the Generalissimo.

Petrograd, August 26, 1917"[170]

Having received the tainted briefing from his envoy, Kerensky might have asked himself why the General employed Lvov as a messenger rather than Savinkov, or better yet, he might have rushed to the nearest telegraph to ask Kornilov whether he indeed commissioned Lvov to negotiate on his behalf. Kerensky did neither.

Kerensky, however, called the general to confirm their conversation and to obtain incontrovertible proof of Kornilov's conspiracy; "He hoped, he said later, with this deception to obtain either a confirmation of Lvov's ultimatum or else a bewildered denial."[171] Here is the full conversation by the Hughes Tape Machine of the Prime Minister with the Commander-in-Chief,

Kerensky: "Good Day, General. V.N. Lvov and Kerensky at the apparatus. We beg you to confirm the statement that Kerensky is to act according to the communication made to him by Vladimir Nikolayevich."
***Kornilov*:** "How do you do, Alexander Fedorovich. How do you do Vladimir Nikolayevich. Confirming once again the outline of the situation I believe the country and the army are in, an outline which I sketched out to Vladimir Nikolayevich with the request that he should report it to you, let me declare once more that the events of the last few days and those already in the offing make it imperative to reach a completely definite decision in the shortest time possible."
Kerensky (impersonating Lvov): "I, Vladimir Nikolayevich, am enquiring about this definite decision, which has to be taken, of which you asked me to inform A.F. strictly in private. Without such confirmation from you personally, A.F. hesitates to trust me completely.

[170] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.166.
[171] Ibid, p.455.

> ***Kornilov:*** Yes, I confirm that I asked you to transmit my urgent request to A.F. to come to Mogilev."
> ***Kerensky:*** "I, A.F., take your reply to confirm the words reported to me by V.N. It is impossible for me to do that and leave here today, but I hope to leave tomorrow. Will Savinkov be needed?"
> ***Kornilov:*** "I urgently request that Boris Viktorovich come along with you. What I said to V.N. equally applies to B.V. I would beg you most sincerely not to put off your departure later than tomorrow. Believe me the responsibility of the moment urges me to persist in my request."
> ***Kerensky:*** **"**Shall we come only in case of an outbreak, of which there are rumors, or in any case?"
> ***Kornilov:*** **"**In any Case"
> ***Kerensky:*** "Good Day. We shall meet soon."
> ***Kornilov:*** "Good Day" [172]

Kerensky was now convinced that the General had dictatorial intentions and that he had "affirmed not only Lvov's authority to speak in Kornilov's name, but confirmed also the accuracy of the words which Lvov had attributed to him"[173]. Kerensky, due to his 'fevered imagination', interpreted Kornilov's confirmation to mean that Kornilov will arrest him. Yet, bearing in mind the Hughes Tape Recordings, one would sense that Kerensky never stated what he was asking and Kornilov never knew what he was responding. As Richard Pipes argues, "The best that can be said in defense of the Prime Minister's behavior is that he was overwrought. But the suspicion lurks that he heard exactly what he wanted to hear."[174]

At the meantime, unaware of Kerensky's misperception of their previous conversation, Kornilov began preparing for the suppression of the expected Bolshevik uprising. To this end he cabled a message to Savinkov stating that "The corps is assembling in the environs of Petrograd toward evening August 28. Request

[172] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.170.
[173] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.456.
[174] *Ibid.,* p.456.

that Petrograd be placed under martial law August 29."[175] The telegraph in concern should have cleared up the Government's concerns about Kornilov's alleged coup; "for surely if he were ordering the Third Corps to Petrograd to unseat the government, he would hardly have forewarned the government by telegraph. It is even less credible that he would have entrusted his alleged coup to a subordinate."[176] As Pipes further points out, reconsidering the ambiguity of the Kornilov Affair, one might hitherto ask oneself the obvious question: "How was it that Kornilov sent his troops while he himself sat quietly at headquarters?"[177]

He had transmitted an ultimatum to Mogilev, ordering Kornilov to transfer the Supreme Command to General Lukomsky and without waiting for the latter's arrival to proceed to Petrograd. The immediate reply of General Lukomsky, the chief of staff, however, was negative. General Lukomsky's telegram is of crucial importance (*No. 640*) because it not only lays down a careful analysis of the Russian politics, the Revolution and the Army's stance but also illuminates the confused mind of Kornilov in Kerensky's plot. It is, therefore, necessary to look at his telegram at length.

> "All persons in touch with military affairs were perfectly aware that, in view of the existing state of affairs, when the actual direction of internal policy was in the hands of irresponsible public organizations, having an enormously deleterious effect on the Army, it would be impossible to resurrect the latter; on the contrary, the Army properly speaking, would cease to exist in two or three months. Russia would then be obliged to conclude a shameful separate peace, whose consequences to the country would be terrible. The government took half measures, which, changing nothing, merely prolonged the agony, and, in saving the Revolution, did not save Russia. At the same time, the preservation of the benefits of the Revolution depended solely on the salvation of Russia, for which purpose the first step must be the establishment of a really strong

[175] *Ibid.,* p.457.
[176] *Ibid.,* p.457.
[177] *Ibid.,* p.457.

> Government and the reform of the home Front. General Kornilov drew up a series of demands, the execution of which has been delayed. In these circumstances, General Kornilov, actuated by no motives of personal gain or aggrandizement, and supported by the clearly-expressed will of the entire right-thinking sections of the Army and the Civil community, who demanded the speedy establishment of a strong Government for the saving of their native land, and of the benefits of the Revolution, considered more severe measures requisite which would secure the reestablishment of order in the country.
> The arrival of Savinkov and Lvov, who in your name made General Kornilov similar proposals, only brought General Kornilov to a speedy decision. In accordance with your suggestions, he issued his final orders, which it is now too late to repeal.
> Your telegram of to-day shows that you have now altered your previous decision, communicated in your name by Savinkov and Lvov. Conscience demands from me, desiring only the good of the Motherland, to declare to you absolutely that it is now impossible to stop what was commenced with your approval; this will lead but to civil war, the final dissolution of the Army, and a shameful separate peace, as a consequence of which the conquests of Revolution will certainly not be secured to us.
> In the interests of the salvation of Russia you must work with General Kornilov, and not dismiss him. The dismissal of General Kornilov will bring upon Russia as yet unheard of horrors. Personally, I decline to accept any responsibility for the Army, even though it be for a short period, and do not consider it possible to take over the command from General Kornilov, as this would occasion an outburst in the Army which would cause Russia to perish."[178]

2.2.2. The Kornilov Mutiny

Tremendously angered by Kerensky's disloyalty, Kornilov appointed General Krymov as commander of the Savage Division, and ordered his soldiers to march on Petrograd with the sole intention of crushing the suspected Bolshevik uprising. One last step came from Savinkov to save the country from the devastation caused by a monumental and tragic misunderstanding. Savinkov communicated with Kornilov and learned the details of his contact with Lvov. Kornilov told Savinkov that all his actions were in accordance with the instructions of the Government as conveyed by Savinkov and continued, "deeply convinced that the (dismissal) decision, entirely

[178] Lukomsky, *Memoirs…,* p.319.

unexpected to me, had been taken under pressure of the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies…I firmly declare…that I will not leave my post."[179] Striving to mend the breach between the two camps, Savinkov hurried to the Premier's office to offer him a last rapprochement with his commander-in-chief, yet it was too late.

A press communiqué was already released, under the signature of Kerensky, to defend the country from certain circles that had the purpose of "establishing a political system inimical to the conquests of the Revolution."[180] The following text is Kerensky's message to the Russian people, which deserves attention for it not only reveals Kerensky's hysterical approach to the general, but also constitutes the final source of disagreement that triggered the Kornilov movement,

> "On August 26, General Kornilov sent to me the member of the State Duma Vladimir Nikolayevich Lvov, with a demand for the surrender by the Provisional Government of the whole plenitude of Civil and Military authority, with a view to his forming, at his personal discretion, a NEW GOVERNMENT for administering the country. The authenticity of Deputy Lvov's authorization to make such a proposal to me was subsequently confirmed by General Kornilov in his conversation with me by direct wire. Perceiving in the presentation of such demands, addressed to the Provisional Government in my person, a desire of some circles of Russian society to take advantage of the grave condition of the State for the purpose of establishing in the country a state of authority in contradiction to the conquests of the Revolution, the Provisional Government has found it indispensable:
> To authorize me, for the salvation of OUR country, of liberty, and of Republican order, to take prompt and resolute measures for the purpose of uprooting any attempt to encroach upon the Supreme Authority in the State and upon the rights which the citizens have conquered by the Revolution…
> At the same time I order herewith:
> I. General Kornilov to surrender the post of Commander-in-Chief to General Klembovsky, the Commander-in-Chief over the armies of the Northern Front which bar the way to Petrograd; and General Klembovsky to enter temporarily upon the post of Supreme Commander-in-Chief, while remaining at Pskov.
> II. To declare the city and district of Petrograd under martial law, extending to it the regulations for the localities declared under Martial Law…

[179] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.460.
[180] *Ibid.,* p.459.

> I call upon all the citizens to preserve complete tranquility and to maintain order, which is so indispensable for the salvation of the country. I call upon all the ranks of the army and navy to carry on with calmness and self-abnegation their duty of defending the country against external enemy.
> A.F. KERENSKY t*he 27th day of August 1917*"[181]

Having read Kerensky's list of accusations, Kornilov's rage and hatred reached an uncontrollable level; notwithstanding the Premier's insulting language, Kornilov was mostly tempered by the fact that Kerensky touched his patriotic nerve. The publication of Kerensky's letter marked not only the deep dismay of Kornilov, but also his irreconcilable breakup with the Provisional Government. He wired a counter- message to all front commanders, who gave Kornilov moral support, yet did not join him due to the ambiguity of the situation provoked by Kerensky's message. The proclamation of Kornilov was wired the same day, shortly after the Premier's communiqué.

> "The Premier's telegram…is in its first portion a lie throughout: it was not I who sent Deputy Vladimir Lvov to the Provisional Government, but he came to me as the Premier's envoy. Deputy Alexis Aladin is a witness to this.
>
> A great provocation has thus taken place, which jeopardizes the fate of the FATHERLAND.
>
> People of Russia!
>
> Our great country is dying. The hour of its end is near. Being compelled to come forward in the open, I, General Kornilov, declare that, under the pressure of the Bolshevik majority of the Soviets, the Provisional government is acting in complete accord with the plans of the German General Staff, at the time when enemy troops are landing on Riga coast; it is killing the army and shaking the foundations of the country…
>
> …I, General Kornilov, the son of a Cossack peasant, declare to all and sundry that I want nothing for my own person, except the preservation of a Great Russia, and I swear to carry over the people, by means of a victory over the enemy, to the Constituent Assembly at which it will decide its own fate and choose the order of its new State life…
>
> Russian people, the life of your country is in your hands!
> GENERAL KORNILOV *The 27th day of August 1917*"[182]

[181] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.217.
[182] *Ibid.,* p.216.

The proclamation indicated Kerensky's accusations provoked Kornilov to rebellion and that Kerensky exacerbated rather than healed the breach. Nevertheless, Kornilov's call for salvation did not receive considerable support neither from the generals nor from conservative and liberal circles, a majority of which asserted their allegiance to his program at the Moscow Conference only a few days earlier. Kerensky's blatant distortion of the background of the crisis is also manifest in the fact that the Generals refused to follow Kornilov – "an additional proof that they had not been involved in any conspiracy with him."[183]

Furthermore, Krymov, who was advancing toward the capital in line with his duties, halted the Savage division on receiving the following message from Kerensky. On August 29, Kerensky wired new orders to Krymov and said "In Petrograd complete calm. No disturbances (vystupleniia) expected. There is no need for your corps. The Provisional Government commands you, on your personal responsibility, to stop the advance on Petrograd, ordered by the removed Commander-in-Chief, and direct corps not to Petrograd but to its operational destination in Narva."[184] As Pipes suggests, "the message makes sense only if Kerensky assumed that Krymov was advancing to Petrograd to quell Bolshevik disturbances."[185] "The promise, however, was never redeemed. By Wednesday (September 5) it had become clear that the *coup* was going to fail…Kornilov, a man of strong will and great courage, was under the influence of two doubtful individuals, his secretary Zavoiko and a member of the First Duma, Aladin."[186] Fraternization

[183] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.461.

[184] Kerensky. Quoted in Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.461.
[185] *Ibid.,* p.461.
[186] Harvey Pitcher, *Witnesses of the Russian Revolution* (London: John Murray, 1994)

took place between the troops advancing on Petrograd and those sent out to meet them.

Although Petrograd was weak against the advance of Kornilov's army, not a single drop of blood was shed; perhaps due to Kornilov's neglecting his troops' apathy and the willingness of the Soviets to crush Kornilov no less than their desire for revolution. One might even claim that without the aid of the Soviets, Kerensky would have been desperate. Kerensky, however, believes that "The Kornilov movement was bloodlessly crushed at the very first moment, only thanks to the enthusiasm and the unity of the whole country, which had rallied to the national democratic authority. This unity embraced immeasurably wider strata of the population than Soviet circles at that time."[187] M.B. Bruyevich later wrote: "I did not expect the Kornilov revolt to succeed; on the contrary, I was sure that it would fail. I was well aware that Kornilov could count on but a handful of officers, for he could naturally expect no support from the soldiers. One had to be a witless scatterbrain like Kornilov to believe in the possibility of conquering revolutionary Russia with the aid of only two or three divisions of cavalrymen demoralized by a long period of inactivity and sated with fleshpots of life in the rear."[188]

Upon his arrival in Petrograd, Krymov met with Kerensky in the Alexander III study. A long an intense argument took place between Krymov and Kerensky, followed by Krymov's suicide. The next day, Mikhail Alexeyev reluctantly agreed to take up the reins as Commander-in-Chief, "the post from which Kerensky had so ignominiously sacked him in June."[189] Alexeyev put Kornilov under house arrest in

[187] Kerensky, *The Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.225.
[188] M.B. Bruyevich *From Tsarist General to Red Army Commander* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1966), p.150.
[189] Moynahan, *Comrades*…, p.245.

the Bykhov Fortress, where he was allowed to keep his red-cloaked bodyguards.[190] Within a week Alexeyev resigned with the following explanation: "I can state with horror that we have no army…It cannot continue like this…Kornilov and those arrested with him are not adventurers; these are people who sincerely love their country".[191]

Even though the well-known Kornilov affair was checked within a few days, the panic concerning counter-revolution and the growth of suspicious attitudes towards the Provisional Government made it easy for the Bolsheviks to take advantage of the turmoil. Lenin, during the hot days of the affair, told his comrades that; "We will fight, we are fighting against Kornilov, even as Kerensky's troops do, but we do not support Kerensky. On the contrary, we expose his weakness…we shall not overthrow Kerensky right now, we shall approach the task of struggling against him in a different way, namely we shall point out to the people the *weakness and vacillation* of Kerensky."[192] It seems obvious that Lenin was aware that he had found a precious opportunity to initiate his assault on the remaining powers that opposed him. Kerensky was now "completely in the hands of the maximalists and the Bolsheviks" wrote Zinaida Gippius, "The ball is over. They haven't raised their heads yet. They sit. Tomorrow, of course, they will get on their feet."[193]

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[190] Up until August 1917, Alexeyev and Kornilov regarded each other rather critically. Alexeyev did not think highly of Kornilov, for he knew his weaknesses as a military leader, which had earlier led to the defeat of a Russian army in Galician front, in 1915. In the spring of 1917 Alexeyev argued with the war minister Guchkov, who intended to appoint Kornilov as the commander-in-chief of the Northern front armies. Kornilov, for his part, accused Alexeyev for failing the Russian army in World War I, and in general considered him passive – the way fighting generals consider room strategists.

Source: S.V. Karpenко, *Ocherki Istorii Belogo Dvijenya Na Yuge Rasii* (Москva: Biblioteka, 2003)pp.15-16

[191] Alexeev, quoted in Moynahan, *Comrades*…, p.245.
[192] Lenin, quoted in Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair'…, p.250.
[193] Gippius, quoted in Moynahan, *Comrades*…, p.247.

CHAPTER III

3. *THE PRELUDE TO BOLSHEVISM*[194]

3.1. The Impact of the Kornilov Affair on Russian Politics

In 1934 Kerensky wrote: "In the autumn of 1917, in Russia, the question which is now foremost in the mind of all Europe was formulated for the first time: Democracy or Dictatorship? Lenin in Russia was not the product of any un-European qualities of the Russian people, but the direct consequence of the War (WWI) which has affected the psychology of the masses in the same way throughout Europe."[195] Indeed, a long-accepted assumption has been that the Kornilov affair brought Lenin back into the mainstream of Russia's revolutionary life. Having read the Petrograd press, which was available in Finland, Lenin wrote a letter to the central committee: "Kornilov's revolt is quite unexpected at such a moment and in such a form- it is really an unlikely sharp turn of events."[196]

As Norman Saul argues, "The Kornilov affair is important, then, as a catalyst upon Lenin, who began to search intensely for answers to certain questions."[197] Despite different interpretations, most accounts of the Russian Revolution have been in complete agreement that the Kornilov Affair was one of the turning points in the course of the Revolution. Katkov and Chamberlin, for instance, both view the Affair as the major cause of the Provisional Government's downfall – although, for Katkov there was no Kornilov Plot to stage a coup, but rather there was a confusion created

[194] The title of this chapter is inspired by A.F. Kerensky's book on the Kornilov Affair.
[195] Alexander Kerensky, *The Crucifixion of Liberty* (London: Arthur Barker Ltd., 1934) p.358.
[196] 'V tsentral'nyi komitet RSDRP', Lenin, *op. cit.,* vol. 34, p. 119
[197] Norman Saul, 'Lenin' decision to Seize Power: The Influence of Events in Finland', *Soviet Studies,* Vol. 24, No.4 (Apr., 1973), 491 – 505.

by Kerensky's *agent provocateurs,* whereas the latter believes that Kornilov was a self appointed counter-revolutionary, who eventually damaged the Provisional Government. Yet, while denying mutiny, conspiracy, and treachery on Kornilov's part, Katkov argues that "Kornilov intended to suppress the soviets and force a reorganization of the Provisional Government, and he talked at length about a collective dictatorship, that indeed Kornilov had a plan to overthrow the government."[198]

Another contemporary Russian historian, Richard Pipes, who has written extensively on the Revolution of 1917, suggests that the Kornilov revolt resulted from Kerensky's conviction that the army was likely to 'breed a counter revolutionary Napoleon.' E.H. Carr, on the contrary, takes a Western pro-Bolshevik stance and tries to justify Kerensky's fear of a military coup from the right- the Kornilov mutiny. Orlando Figes sides with Katkov and argues that Kornilov was far from plotting a coup and that the alleged mutiny was an 'enduring myth of the Russian Revolution.'

Michael Smith, in his recent article on the 'Musavat Mutiny,' emphasizes another aspect of the 'Kornilov Affair.' Smith argues that in Bolshevik propaganda as well as in the later historiography, the 'Kornilov Mutiny' was of a piece with the 'Musavat Mutiny' of March 1918.[199] The connecting link was the Savage Division. In Smith's satirical language,

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[198] John Bushnell, 'Book Review of George Katkov's Russia 1917' *Military Affairs* Vol. 46, No.1 (Feb., 1982), p.51

[199] In 1911 the Musavat Party was established in Baku by the leading members of the Himmat together with other progressive members of the Islamic community. In its early years before the first world war, it was relatively small, secret underground organization, much like its counterparts in the Middle East, working for the prosperity and political unity of the Muslim and Turkic-speaking world. "The Tsar's secret police kept a close watch, never really identifying the Musavat Party as such but staying well attuned to the subversive 'pan Islamic' ideals of its members and sympathizers."

> "It (The Savage Division) had blindly served Kornilov's notorious putsch attempt the year before. Now it provoked the armed uprising or mutiny of Musavat Forces against *legitimate* Soviet power. In the Bolshevik lore, the conflict brought 20,000 fighters to the streets of Baku, evenly matched between the 10,000 Russian and Armenian troops of the Baku Soviet and the 10,000 Muslim 'troops' of the Savage Division. This was an all-out 'civil war.' The *legitimate* authorities representing Soviet power, intent on breaking out of the 'circle' of counter-revolution surrounding it, fought the good fight against the illegitimate rebels under the direction of the Musavat, intent on raising Baku as the capital of a renegade country (Azerbaijan) and uniting with the advancing Anatolian Turks. This was a civil war that, quite by coincidence in the Soviet version, also turned into the murderous 'national war' between Dashnak and Muslim forces between 1 and 3 April. The Bolsheviks freely admitted their inability to prevent the anti-Muslim pogroms that were perpetrated by renegade Dashnak troops and that spread to nearby cities and villages."[200]

In brief, most accounts of the Kornilov Affair argue that the clash between Kornilov and Kerensky fatally damaged the latter's authority, as well as his relationship with conservative and liberal circles without reinforcing his socialist support. The main beneficiaries of the Kornilov Affair were, thus, the Bolsheviks; as Abraham Ascher puts it, "The Kornilov rebellion was essentially a test of strength between Kornilov and Kerensky; the victor, strange as it may sound, was Lenin…Indeed, the Bolshevik strategy was to help crush the Generalissimo and then take advantage of the ensuing chaos"[201] Ascher is highly critical of Kornilov's role rather than Kerensky's. Ascher is almost certain that Kornilov rebelled against the Provisional Government with the pretext that there would be a Bolshevik uprising supposedly scheduled for September 10th. Hence he argues that Kerensky acted properly in dismissing Kornilov. Leonid Strakhovsky, however, challenged Ascher's

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Source: Michael G. Smith 'Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narratives of the Russian Revolution in Baku' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.36, No.2 (Apr., 2001) 211 - 240

[200] Michael G. Smith 'Anatomy of a Rumour: Murder Scandal, the Musavat Party and Narratives of the Russian Revolution in Baku' *Journal of Contemporary History* Vol.36, No.2 (Apr., 2001), p. 227
[201] Ascher, 'The Kornilov Affair'…, p.250.

interpretation arguing that the real villain of the episode was Kerensky, who by deliberately betraying his Commander-in-Chief delivered Russia into the hands of the Bolsheviks. According to Strakhovsky, Kornilov was not a counterrevolutionary; rather he was a courageous general, who only believed that Kerensky had fallen under the influence of the Soviet thereby requesting Kornilov's surrender. A similar view was raised in 1970 by Harvey Asher (not to be confused with A. Ascher) who tried to prove that when Kornilov refused to surrender, it was obviously "an act of insubordination, but certainly not of mutiny or rebellion as Kerensky wanted it to appear."[202]

Kerensky's wife, on the other hand, wrote that the prestige of Kerensky and the Provisional Government was completely destroyed by the Kornilov Affair, and that he was left almost without any supporters.[203] "Beyond the corridors of the Winter Palace" wrote Figes, "all Kerensky's decrees were ignored. There was a vacuum of power; and it was now only a question of who would dare to fill it."[204] Although the Bolsheviks often claimed that the course of the October Revolution of 1917 had already been defined before the Kornilov Affair, the Generalissimo's insurrection and Kerensky's exposed weakness gave it a great momentum. In fact, Kerensky already lost ground when he failed to carry out punitive actions against the Bolsheviks for the July Days - a timidity, which mostly derived from the fact that Kerensky did not dare to risk the Soviet's support. Reprieved by the crisis following the Kornilov Affair, the Bolsheviks labored "stubbornly and without letup".[205] On 15th September 1917, Louis de Robien wrote in his memoirs that,

> "The conflict between Kornilov and Kerensky is going to take a back seat, because a far more dangerous struggle is in the preparation

[202] Harvey Asher, 'The Kornilov Affair', *Russian Review,* Vol.29, No.3 (Jul.,1970), p.287
[203] Figes, *A People's Tragedy…,* p.455.
[204] *Ibid.,* p.455.
[205] Moynahan, *Comrades*…, p.248.

> between the government, supported by all those who want relative order, and the Soviets, who have realized the extent of their strength as a result of this venture, and who are preaching to their *tovariches* to revolt against all authority."[206]

The waning popularity of Kerensky and the Provisional Government in the aftermath of the Kornilov Affair ruined the last hopes for amelioration in Russia, both in the rear and at the front. George Katkov, in his book on the Kornilov Affair, argues that the disastrous impact of the Kornilov affair was most apparent in the Russian army. The counter-accusations of Kornilov and Kerensky was confusing and demoralizing the troops; "The susceptibility of the soldiers to such (Bolshevik) propaganda translated into behavior of an anarchical nature, including the arbitrary lynching of officers." [207] Furthermore, the Bolshevik newspapers were publishing instances of these killings. On September 2 1917, for example, the Bolshevik paper *Izvestia* wrote: "at first three generals and a colonel, who were arrested earlier, on charges of supporting Kornilov, were dragged out of the guardhouse by the crowd, thrown off the bridge and killed in the water."[208] The Kornilov Affair left the supreme command with a diminishing authority that led to Kerensky's demise. As Victor Shklovsky[209] recalled:

> "The Russian army was ruptured even before the Revolution. Revolution, the Russian Revolution, with the 'maximalism of democratism' by the Provisional Government, freed the army from all constraints. There were no laws left in the army – not even rules. But there was a complement of trained men, capable of sacrifice, capable of holding the trenches. Even without constraints, a short

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[206] Robien, *The Diary of A Diplomat in Russia…,* p.112.
[207] George Katkov, *Russia:1917 The Kornilov Affair* (New York: Longman Inc., 1980) p.122
[208] "Article Printed in *Izvestia* on September 2, 1917," Browder and Kerensky… Doc. 1309
[209] Victor Shklovsky became prominent as a Futurist poet and theoretician. In 1914, he organized the *Opoyaz* Group (Society for the Study of Literary Language). When the Russian Revolution broke out in February 1917 he was serving in the tsarist army as an instructor. The army, already suffered from demoralization following the defeats, was now seriously damaged by the effects of Order No. 1, which provided for the election of officers and for soldiers' councils in every military unit. When Kerensky became Premier, Shklovsky was sent to the front (Galicia) in June 1917.
Source: Richard Sheldon, Introduction to Shklovsky's article *At the Front: Summer 1917*, which was published in the Russian Review (1967)

> war was possible – a blitzkrieg…we knew that what lay in front of us was not an army, but a hash – distinctly worse than our 16th Corps and a good deal more cowardly; but unfortunately the Germans did, however approximately, follow orders."[210]

Marc Ferro, on the other hand, suggests "the February Revolution had broken out in the streets and was the handiwork of all, but the part played by the soldiers had been all-important – as it was in April and again in June, September, and October. But now not only the troops at the rear were involved; those at the front had also joined in the movement and, in the face of the Germans, had thrown into question one of the oldest traditions – army discipline."[211] He further argues that Kerensky's fear of breaking with the General Staff, his deep-seated hostility to the Soviets, his preference for negotiations at all costs, and his delusion that he could reconcile the irreconcilable were all factors that induced Kerensky to deal gently with Kornilov in their duel. This attitude had the most drastic results. "It alienated for good the sympathy of those who had continued to obey the rules of any institutions yet functioning" wrote Ferro after presenting an inquiry concerning several battalions of the Russian Army at the Eastern Front.[212]

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[210] Victor B. Shklovsky 'At the Front: Summer 1917' *Russian Review,* Vol.26, No.3 (Jul., 1967), 219-230

[211] Marc Ferro, 'The Russian Soldier in 1917'… p.507

[212] 1. What is the general situation? (Fairly Good)
2. Fighting proficiency? (Fairly Good)
3. Cases of refusal to obey orders? (Fluctuating)
4. Cases of failure to obey? (Frequent but without downright refusal)
5. Relations with civilian population? (Often difficult)
6. Influence of Political Committees? (Often adjudged 'good' by the Staff)
7. Influence of reinforcements? (Often 'bad')
8. Influence of Political Parties? (Often 'weak')
9. Is military justice resorted to? (Rarely)
10. Desertions? (Not many)

Number of Bolshevik Groups	*July*	*September*	*November*
Southwestern Front	44	108	135
Rumanian Front	30	65	145

Source: Ibid, p.508

Observing the disastrous September, Buchanan wrote, "it (Kornilov Affair) deprived officers of the little authority which they previously possessed, while it had restored the influence of the Soviet. The latter had passed resolutions abolishing the death penalty, declaring all existing secret treaties invalid, and demanding the immediate conclusion of a universal democratic peace."[213] Furthermore, the reaction against the Kornilovites grew to an even greater extent than the anti-Bolshevik phobia during the July days. "Now it was the monarchists …anyone with the faintest hue of the Tsarist past, who was hunted off the streets" wrote Moorehead, "but it was upon the inner political structure of the socialist movement that the Kornilov fiasco had its really significant effect."[214]

A different alignment was being formed among the various socialist groups throughout September; the Mensheviks had gradually became confined to the government cadres and the skilled workers to the trade-unions, while the Socialist-Revolutionaries were becoming "rather less of a peasant party than they were before."[215] Similarly, in his personal records of the Russian Revolution, Sukhanov wrote:

> "Even before the Kornilov mutiny, before the Fall of Riga and after the Moscow Conference, the entire bourgeois press had sounded the alarm about the Bolshevik peril, in connection with 'reliable reports' about forthcoming 'demonstrations' by the Bolsheviks… The Kornilov incident, however, not only accelerated the Bolshevization of the Soviets and the worker-peasant masses, but was also sharply reflected in the current policies of Lenin's *Soviet opponents*. The Mensheviks and the SRs who ruled in the Central Ex. Com. were just as far from Bolshevism as before; but they too had shifted their positions and swung Left." [216]

The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, began to control the bulk of society, who were "stirred and shaken up by the recent events"; in Moorehead's words, "it was left

[213] Buchanan, *My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memories…,* p.189.
[214] Alan Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution* (London: Collins and Hamish Hamilton, 1958), p.246.
[215] *Ibid.,* p.247.
[216] Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.523.

to the Bolsheviks to exploit the rest of the population, the city workers, the soldiers, the vast illiterate hordes who had nothing much to lose and a great deal to gain from the break up of the established order."[217] Indeed, throughout September 1917, the workers and soldiers of the Petrograd Soviet began turning to the Bolsheviks in remarkable numbers.[218] On September 12, for instance, when the tension between the Kornilovites and the Soviets was at its height, the impact of the Kornilov Affair on the left became crystal clear at the Petrograd Soviet meeting;

> "by 279 votes to 115 the Petrograd Soviet passed a Bolshevik resolution which demanded that Russia should be declared a republic, that the government should be made up entirely of socialists, that the land should be given to the peasant Soviets, that the workers should control industry, that the secret peace treaties should be annulled, and that peace should be concluded at once – in short the whole Bolshevik programme."[219]

Trotsky became the chairman of the Petrograd Soviet; he later recalled in his autobiography that "While handing over the chairmanship, Tsereteli asked me how we would be able to retain our authority. The implication was that they gave us three months at most. They were terribly mistaken. We were making solid steps towards authority."[220] It was the first apparent Bolshevik victory, upon which Lenin called upon his comrades to put every possible pressure on Kerensky, compelling him to give more concessions. An all-out Bolshevization was taking place in Russia, from every small district to major towns; on September 18, the Moscow Soviet voted for the Bolshevik Nogin as its chairman. On September 27, Lenin wrote:

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[217] Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.247.

[218] MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS IN MOSCOW

PARTY	*June 1917*	*September 1917*	*Change*
SRs	58.9	14.7	-44.2
Mensheviks	12.2	4.2	-8.0
Bolsheviks	11.7	49.5	+37.8
Kadets	17.2	31.5	+14.3

Source: Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.466

[219] *Ibid.,* p.248.

[220] Lev Trocki, *Hayatim* (Istanbul: Yazin Yayincilik, 1999), p.343.

> "Without deliberately closing one's eyes, one cannot fail to see that after the Kornilov affair Kerensky's government is leaving everything as before, that in fact it is bringing back the Kornilov affair. The appointment of Alexeev, the peace with the Klembovskys, Gagarins, Bagrations and other Kornilov men, and leniency in the treatment of Kornilov and Kaledin all very clearly prove that Kerensky is in fact bringing back the Kornilov affair. There is no middle course. This has been shown by experience. Either all power goes to the Soviets and the army is made fully democratic, or another Kornilov affair occurs."[221]

Witnessing the rapid Bolshevization following the Kornilov Affair, the Mensheviks and the SRs made one last attempt to revive the government and to contain the growing tide of revolution; they decided to summon the socialist party groups, the zemstvos, industrialists, and soldiers' deputies in an All-Russia Democratic Conference in mid-September. The Central Committee of the Bolsheviks immediately called a party conference, where Trotsky proposed the slogan of boycotting the Democratic Conference and the Pre-Parliament. His proposal was met with intense opposition by some delegates led by Kamenev and Riazanov, while the rest, led by Lenin, welcomed it.[222]

The Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party, having divided in two opposing camps concerning Trotsky's proposal, submitted the question to the decision of the conference. Actually, the question in concern was more related with the consistency of the traditional ideology of the party; in Trotsky's words, "The question was whether the party should accommodate its tasks to the development of a bourgeois republic, or should really set itself the goal of conquering the power…In reality the quarrel revived the April disagreements and initiated the disagreements of October."[223] The party conference rejected the slogan of boycott by a majority of 77 votes against 50; Riazanov announced that the Bolshevik representatives would be

[221] Lenin, *Lenin's Collected Works: Volume 25* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1964), p.370.
[222] Leon Trotsky, *The History Of The Russian Revolution* (London: Pluto Press, 1985), p.842.
[223] *Ibid.,* p.841.

sent to the Democratic Conference with the intention of "in this new fortress of compromisism to expose all attempts at a new coalition with the bourgeoisie."[224] In response to Riazanov's announcement Lenin wrote:

> "We must boycott the Pre-Parliament. We must go out into the soviets of workers, soldiers, and peasants' deputies, go out into the trade unions, go out in general to the masses. We must summon them to the struggle. We must give them a correct and clear slogan: To drive out the Bonapartist gang of Kerensky with its fake Pre-Parliament. . The Mensheviks and Social Revolutionaries even after the Kornilov events refused to accept our offer of compromise. . . .Ruthless struggle against them! Ruthless expulsion of them from all revolutionary organizations! . . . Trotsky was for the boycott. Bravo, Comrade Trotsky! Boycottism was defeated in the faction of the Bolsheviks who attended the Democratic Conference. Long live the boycott!"[225]

Indeed, the conference was a fiasco from its very outset; In Sukhanov's words, "It (the Conference) proceeded on is futile, tiresome business: a debate on whether we should have a Coalition or a purely democratic Government…We were back in the old *post-July*, *pre-Kornilov* situation. A fourth irresponsible Coalition was revived, which once again confirmed the formal dictatorship of the bourgeoisie…, the whole situation was more absurd and intolerable than before. There was no state power and no State."[226] The only notable outcome of the conference was that, while pending the elections for the Constituent Assembly, the parties reached a consensus on the establishment of a temporary parliamentary body under the name of the 'Pre-Parliament[227]', and fixed the opening date of this new political body for October 20.[228] Despite the initial Bolshevik debates on boycotting the conference, Trotsky later asked permission to make an emergency statement and was granted ten minutes. In his speech, Trotsky said that,

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[224] *Ibid.,* p.842.
[225] *Ibid.,* p.843.
[226] Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.527.
[227] The workers ridiculed the *Predparlament* (Pre-parliament) by calling it *Predbannik* (Pre-hamam) Source: SBKP, *Sovyetler Birligi Komunist Partisi Tarihi…,* p.243.
[228] Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.252.

> "The propertied classes are openly steering a course for the bony hand of hunger, which is expected to strangle the revolution and the Constituent Assembly first of all. Nor is their foreign policy any less criminal. After forty months of war the capital is threatened by mortal danger. In response to this a plan had been put forward for the transfer of the government to Moscow. The idea of surrendering the revolutionary capital to German troops does not arouse the slightest indignation among the bourgeois classes; on the contrary it is accepted as a natural link in the general policy that is supposed to help them in their counter-revolutionary conspiracy…We the Bolshevik faction of the Social-Democratic party, declare that, with this government of national treachery we have nothing in common…We refuse to shield it either directly or indirectly for a single day…Petrograd is in danger, the revolution is in danger, the nation is in danger. The government is intensifying that danger…Only the nation can save itself and the country…Long live the Constituent Assembly"[229]

Trotsky's message is crucial because it not only divided the socialist parties at the Democratic Conference by the sheer commanding effect of its rhetoric, but it also led the Bolsheviks to rise from their seats and walk out of the conference. In this sense, his speech might be considered as a declaration of the imminent revolution; the Bolsheviks will have nothing more to do with parliaments and conferences.

In short, the Bolsheviks, who were simply trying to gain time to establish a proper army before the Kornilov affair, found themselves seeking ways to seize the power – the power, which snatched away in July. As studied above, in order to suppress Kornilov, Kerensky called for help from the Soviet, which approved, on a Menshevik motion, the creation of a 'Committee to Fight the Counterrevolution'. Yet, since the Bolshevik Military Organization was the only armed force that the Soviet could invoke, the Bolshevik forces were placed as the Soviet's military contingent; thus, as Pipes argues, "yesterday's arsonists became today's firefighters."[230] Lenin and Zinoviev[231], in Sukhanov's words, "taking advantage of

[229] Trotsky, quoted in Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.253.
[230] Pipes, *The Russian Revolutions* ..., p.466
[231] Grigory Yevseyevich Zinoviev was a revolutionary, who worked closely with Lenin before October 1917. He became a central figure within the Communist Party until his removal by Stalin.

their leisure, began deepening their current programme and tactics – tactics of finished Jacobinism and a programme of general explosion, as an example to proletarian Europe."[232] To this end, on September 30, Lenin wrote a message from his hiding in Finland, and urged the Central Committee to seize power. In Lenin's words,

> "The crisis is here…It is criminal to delay…Not only Russia but all Europe was on the edge of revolution. They must strike at three places: in Petrograd, in Moscow, and in the Baltic Fleet. They must have plans to assault the Winter Palace, to seize the bridges across the Neva, to isolate the capital from the hinterland. Why won't the Central Committee act? Can't they see that the party has power NOW and that there is no point in waiting for the all-Russian Congress of Soviets in November?"[233]

3.2. The Bolsheviks Seize Power

As Kerensky later recalled in his *Memoirs,* Before World War I there had been no doubt about the meaning of the two words 'revolution' and 'counter-revolution'.

> "'Revolution' meant the forceful overthrow by the people of a state system… 'Counter-revolution' meant the restoration by force of the political system existing prior to the Revolution. Revolution was supposed to break out spontaneously, to have its roots deep among the people, and to bring about the establishment of democracy. Counter-revolution was usually the work of a particular group among the ruling classes, and was always followed by a period of 'reaction'… (But) After World War I, in which millions of people throughout Europe were embroiled in a political maelstrom, *any* movement on a mass scale came to be termed a 'revolution'; no matter what aims its leaders were pursuing…there was a vast difference from the point of view of the people's interests and the future of Russia, between the Kornilov movement and Lenin's movement, which the Kornilov movement had revived." [234]

Lenin's advocacy of an armed uprising and seizure of power, as envisaged in his *April Thesis*, was a passionate plan but the time he proposed for the insurrection did

[232] Sukhanov, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.525.
[233] Lenin, quoted in Moorehead, *The Russian Revolution…,* p.250.
[234] Alexander Kerensky, *Memoirs* (London: Cassell, 1966) p.404.

not seem entirely convincing to his fellow party members. After all, the Bolsheviks gained an upper-hand in the Soviet, thus, most party members were waiting for the Soviet to seize power, which would at least be a quasi-legal, peaceful transfer of power. On October 9, 1917 Lenin came to Petrograd in disguise and the next day he attended the meeting of the Bolshevik Central Committee, where he strongly condemned the party members for ignoring his previous messages and of letting slip this precious moment – "We shall ruin the revolution" he said.[235] His appearance at the meeting had a profound impact on the members; by a majority of 10 votes (Lenin, Trotsky, Stalin, Sverdlov, Uritsky, Dzerzhinsky, Kolontai, Bubnov, Sokolnikov, Lomov) to 2 (Kamenev and Zinoviev) the Central Committee passed a resolution to prepare for the armed uprising and establish a political bureau to carry out the commands. The *politburo*, which was "the first germ of what later became a permanent institution", consisted of Lenin, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Stalin, Trotsky, Sokolnikov, and Bubnov.[236]

In terms of solidarity among the politburo members, it is crucial to note here that the two delegates, Kamenev and Zinoviev, who voted against Lenin's immediate insurrection proposal, were Lenin's old comrades. These two men considered a Bolshevik *coup* as an irresponsible act, and argued that it would be impossible to hold power without the aid of the Soviet. To this end, they circulated protest letters to major Bolshevik organizations, including Maxim Gorky's *Novaya Zhizn,* and published a list of their arguments; Lenin was inevitably frustrated not only because these letters opposed his advocacy of the second stage of the Revolution, but also because the forewarning of an imminent Bolshevik *coup.* [237] Nonetheless, this

[235] Edward Hallett Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917 – 1923* (London: Macmillan & Co. Ltd, 1950), p.94.
[236] *Ibid.,* p.94.
[237] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution...*, p.62.

publicity helped, rather than hindered Lenin's cause; under these circumstances, now it would be fatal for the Bolsheviks not to act and they would be arrested. Of course, Kerensky's ineffectiveness was once more manifested in his reluctance to take decisive measures against the Soviet and the Bolsheviks after the news of a coup d'état had been broken.

On October 16, restating his case for the immediate seizure of power, Lenin arranged an enlarged meeting of the Central Committee attended by Bolsheviks from the Petrograd Soviet party committee, from the Petrograd Soviet military organization and from the trade unions and factory committees.[238] Lenin found the opportunity to put forward his consideration of the party's position to even greater masses:

> "The position is clear. Either a Kornilov dictatorship or a dictatorship of the proletariat and the poorest strata of the peasantry. We cannot be guided by the mood of the masses: that is changeable and unaccountable. We must be guided by an objective analysis and estimate of the revolution. The masses have given their confidence to the Bolsheviks and ask from them not words but deeds."[239]

The discussions showed that although Lenin attracted a majority of the Central Committee members on his side, the concerns of Kamenev and Zinoviev were still shared by large groups. In order to liquidate the opposition, reaffirming his allegiance to Lenin's program, Stalin made a speech, wherein he said: "Here are two lines: one is headed for the victory of the revolution and leans over Europe: the other does not believe in the revolution and counts only on being an opposition. The Petrograd Soviet has already taken its stand on the road to insurrection by refusing to sanction the removal of the armies."[240] Hence, the meeting was concluded with a

[238] Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917 – 1923…,* p.95.
[239] Lenin, quoted in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917 – 1923*…, p.95.
[240] Stalin, quoted in Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917 – 1923*…, p.96.

resolution to begin preparations for an armed insurrection. As Alexander Rabinowitch describes it, the initial approach for an insurrection was formed quickly.

> "In the face of these obstacles to organization of an immediate armed uprising, the following approach gradually suggested itself: (1) that the soviets (because of their stature in the eyes of the workers and soldiers), and not the party groups, should be employed for the overthrow of the Provisional Government; (2) that for the broadest support, any attack on the government should be masked as a defensive operation on behalf of the Soviet; (3) thus that action should be delayed until a suitable excuse for giving battle presented itself; (4) that to undercut potential resistance and to maximize the possibility of success, every opportunity should be utilized to subvert the authority of the Provisional Government peacefully; and (5) that the formal overthrow of the existing government should be linked with and legitimized by the decisions of the Second Congress of Soviets."[241]

"The critical moment was now at hand" wrote E.H. Carr in his account of the October Revolution, "being fixed by the decision to strike the blow before the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets on the evening of October 25."[242] Indeed, the uprising began on 24 October as scheduled; Trotsky attached the members of the Central Committee to the Military-Revolutionary Committee of the Petrograd Soviet to control the post, railways and the Provisional Government. Dzerzhinsky was appointed to check the railways, Bubnov for posts and telegraphs, Sverdlov for the Provisional Government and Milyutin for the food supply. The Bolshevik forces went into action on early morning of October 25, 1917; the key-points of the city were bloodlessly contained, members of the Provisional Government were arrested, and the Winter Palace was surrounded, while Kerensky was allowed to escape.[243] In the afternoon Lenin announced the triumph of the workers' and peasants' revolution while Trotsky explained that,

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[241] Alexander Rabinowitch, 'The October Revolution", in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.87.
[242] Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution: 1917 – 1923*…, p.98.
[243] *Ibid.,* p.99.

> "What has taken place is an uprising, not a conspiracy. An uprising of the masses of the people needs no justification. We have been strengthening the revolutionary energy of the workers and soldiers. We have been forging, openly, the will of the masses for an uprising. Our uprising has won. And now we are being asked to give up our victory, to come to an agreement. With whom? You are wretched, disunited individuals; you are bankrupts; your part is over. Go to the place where you belong from now on the dust-bin of history!"[244]

Eventually, the second All-Russian Congress of Soviets proclaimed the transfer of all power to the Soviets of Workers' and Soldiers' and Peasants' Deputies. At 10 a.m. in the morning it declared that, "The Provisional Government has been deposed…The cause for which the people have fought, namely, the immediate offer of a democratic peace, the abolition of landed proprietorship, workers' control over production, and the establishment of Soviet power—this cause has been secured."[245] Trotsky's brilliant strategy of using the Soviet's military branch not only helped legitimize the Bolshevik coup but also hindered the resistance in the countryside, thus, enabling the Bolsheviks hold on to power. The Winter Palace fell in the evening of October 25 marking the Bolsheviks' victory.

After the Central Executive Committee of the soviets assumed power, the governmental authority was transferred to a new Council of People's Commissars, whose all-Bolshevik members list was submitted to the Congress on October 26.[246] Organized armed struggle against the Bolsheviks began very soon after the overthrow of the Provisional Government. Of all the counter-revolutionary forces, the White movement lasted the longest, had the most stable administrative structure and leadership. As Peter Kenez puts it "Following their victory, the rule of the Bolsheviks remained so insecure that their enemies, however weak, could organize

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[244] Lev Trocki, *Hayatim* (Istanbul: Yazin Yayincilik, 1970), p.351.

[245] Lenin, *Collected Works: Volume 26* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1972), p.236.

[246] Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution...*, p.65.

almost with impunity. Socialist and non-Socialist politicians put together a number of abortive schemer. In the long run, among many domestic enemies of the Bolsheviks only the ex-officers of the Imperial Army proved to be dangerous."[247] Generals Alexeyev and Kornilov, who were among the best-known figures of the defunct Imperial Army, initiated the organization. After Kornilov's death in April 1918 General Denikin took charge and led the Volunteer Army in the decisive campaigns of 1918 and 1919. The last leader of the Whites, General Wrangel, however, struggled against 'insurmountable odds in 1920.'[248]

[247] Peter Kenez, 'Officers' , in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, et.al., eds., *Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution: 1914 – 1921*(Bloomington: Indiana University Press), p.538.
[248] Ibid, p.540

CONCLUSION

The revolution that broke out in Petrograd, in February 1917, was the first of the two revolutions, which characterized the most significant years in Russian History. The fall of the Tsar, Nicholas II, brought an end to the 300-year-old Romanov Dynasty. In the aftermath of this revolution emerged the uneasy and often conflicting Dual Power between the Petrograd Soldiers' and Workers' Deputies and the Provisional Government led by Prince Lvov, who was an old Zemstvo man. As briefly portrayed in the first chapter, it would be difficult to argue that the checks and balances system between the two bodies were efficient. Following the April Crisis, the increasingly unpopular war-efforts of the Provisional Government had led to the spread of local Soviet bodies and the growth of trade unions throughout the country. The troublesome relationship between the Soviet and the government reached its climax in early June followed by an unsuccessful Bolshevik putsch. Three days after the offensive against the Bolsheviks, Alexander Fedorovich Kerensky, took charge of the Provisional Government, imprisoned key Bolshevik leaders such as Trotsky and Kamenev, and appointed General Lavr Kornilov as Commander-in-Chief to restore the fighting capacity of the Russian Army.

Yet, the Premier's relationship with Kornilov, which was covered in detail through the second chapter of this thesis, was much more complicated and in early September the final break occurred between the two camps, paving the way for a rejuvenation of the Bolsheviks. The events that took place between the dramatis personae, which enabled the Bolsheviks to recover from the July debacle and seize power in October, are often referred as 'The Kornilov Affair'. As Alan Wildman puts it,

> "In the historiography and classical accounts of 1917 the Kornilov affair appears sometimes as a pathetic or comic interlude, sometimes as the only viable alternative to Bolshevism, sometimes as a bargain between Kerensky and Kornilov which broke down because of meddling intermediaries or Kerensky's failure of will, sometimes as a straightforward contest between the dichotomized social and political forces of the revolution."[249]

Different interpretations of the Kornilov Affair, which were studied within the third chapter, are to be found in the Russian historiography. Nevertheless, a majority of the historians have a consensus as to the prime importance of the affair on the fall of Kerensky's government and the Bolshevik seizure of power in October 1917. How, then, did Kerensky's handling of the General jeopardized the Provisional Government?

Throughout the preparation of this thesis, an investigation of the memoirs of Tsarist Generals as well as secondary sources on the history of the Russian Revolution revealed the fact that Kerensky's obsessive fear of a counter-revolution from the right and his decision to pursue a campaign against an alleged plot against the government headed by Kornilov fatally weakened the Government's credibility in the eyes of both right and left wing circles. Historical accounts of the Affair as well as recent interpretations of the subject, however, turn out to include considerably divergent views as to whether Kornilov really planned a coup or whether it was just the premier's misleading imagination. Such a difference in opinions is evident in the works of Richard Pipes, Orlando Figes, Edward H. Carr, George Katkov, as well as in the memoirs of old Tsarist generals, such as Brusilov, Lukomsky, Denikin and Bruyevich.

Despite these divergent interpretations, there is a clear unanimity among the historians over the significance of the course of events that took place between the

[249] Allan Wildman, 'Officers of the General Staff and the Kornilov Movement', in Edith Rogovin Frankel, Baruch Knei-Paz, et. al., eds., *Revolution in Russia: Reassessments of 1917* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p.76.

General and the Premier throughout the summer of 1917. An examination of Russian historiography would reveal the existence of a conspiracy of counter-revolution, which included the General and the Premier. Richard Pipes argues, quite justly, that the Kornilov Affair resulted from Kerensky's "sense that the army was likely to breed a counter-revolutionary Napoleon" and his determination to overthrow the general.[250] Likewise, as Figes argues, Kerensky's major fault was to found his political strategy on "straddling left and right" to maintain his central role in the government. It was this same reason behind Kerensky's fear of alienating the support of the Soviet, when he repeatedly avoided committing himself. Bearing in mind Kerensky's efforts to pacify the left while giving up his earlier promises, it becomes clear how Kerensky created tensions with Kornilov, who only desired to restore order and discipline in the Russian Army.

Having considered this point a series of crucial question arises: Had Kerensky managed to deal with the crisis between himself and the Generalissimo, would the Bolshevik insurrection still have been successful? If Kerensky had fulfilled his commitments instead of giving concessions to the left, would the gap between the Soviet and the Government have been bridged and the Constituent Assembly been summoned as scheduled? Would Russia have had the chance to experience a peaceful transition to democracy? While such suggestions would have been possible, it should further be borne in mind that the Provisional Government had other serious challenges; most importantly, the unpopular war-efforts and inflation. As portrayed by Marc Ferro, Norman Stone and Peter Kenez in their detailed accounts of the Russian army, turmoil was inevitable under wartime conditions. As to the Kornilov

[250] Richard Pipes, *A Concise History of the Russian Revolution* (New York: Knopf, 1995), p.129.

Affair, it stands as a turning point in the irreversible course of revolution – a moment when the February system stopped.

The greatest difficulty that confronts a student, who investigates the Kornilov Affair, is that all first-hand accounts of the subject originate from people who were involved (directly or indirectly) in it. It is therefore almost impossible – despite the wealth of source materials – to derive a single conclusion out of it. A prominent investigator of the affair, Dr. James D. White, wrote in 1973 that "From all the literature on the subject three main interpretations emerge which may be termed: 'the great conspiracy', 'the great betrayal', and 'the misunderstanding.'"[251] As studied in the first sub-section of the third chapter, 'The great conspiracy' theory was mainly supported by Kerensky himself, especially in the numerous books he wrote after the Revolution. The collection of documents, which he edited with Paul Browder, further amplified his thesis to some extent. 'The Great Betrayal' theory, on the other hand, was basically the pro-Kornilov version, which is based on Kornilov's statement to the Commission.[252] It argues that there was no Kornilov plot; on the contrary, Kornilov was acting in line with Kerensky's orders (transmitted through his envoy, Lvov.) The memoirs of Sir George Buchanan present the third theory- 'tragic misunderstanding'- which is actually a generous combination of the first two.

Bearing in mind the various accounts on the Affair, however, one is eventually confronted with a number of questions. It is all the more intriguing, for instance, how Krymov committed suicide. Kornilov's failure was mostly a result of the Savage Division's disloyalty under Krymov's command, and this should have deeply disappointed Krymov, who was very close to the General. Nevertheless, it is uncertain how he did it. Kerensky, in *The Catastrophe,* says that "While under arrest

[251] N. Ukraintsev, 'A Document on the Kornilov Affair', *Soviet Studies,* Vol.25., No.2 (Oct.1973), p.284
[252] Commission of Inquiry for the Kornilov Affair

in my office, General Krymov committed suicide with his revolver"[253] In *Prelude to Bolshevism,* on the other hand, he claims that "…an hour or two later after Krymov left my study he committed suicide."[254] N. Ukraintsev, a member of the Commission of Inquiry, wrote an article in 1956 for a New York émigré newspaper *Novoe russkoe slovo,* and asked what should have been asked years ago: Why was the Premier not certain about what happened in his own study?[255] Another serious question, which puzzles the reader, is why Kerensky did not go to Mogiliev to settle his problems with Kornilov and decided to send Lvov. As Ukraintsev puts it "Was he frightened of the lamp-posts in Mogiliev, conjured up by the raving of two windbags, Captain Rodionov and his 'old friend' Lvov?"[256] While various interpretations had been made by contemporary scholars and by those who witnessed the episode, the intriguing affair between the Premier and his C-in-C is likely to remain as an 'enduring myth' of the Russian Revolution.

[253] A.F. Kerensky, *The Catastrophe* (London, 1927), p.321
[254] Kerensky, *Prelude to Bolshevism…,* p.146.
[255] Ukraintsev, *A Document on the Kornilov Affair*…p.286
[256] Ibid., p.298.

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